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THE SYRIAC CHURCH
AND FATHERS

THE SYRIAC CHURCH AND FATHERS

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT

BY

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PREFACE

THE following pages are based on notes of lectures delivered in Bristol University College. The lectures were of an entirely elementary character, and were intended to serve as a first introduction to the study of Syriac literature, and more especially to enable students to fit that literature and the history of Syria into their proper place in relation to the contemporary history of the Roman Empire and of the Christian Church. Whilst the Latin and Greek Fathers have received great attention in Western Europe for many generations past, it is worth remembering that there is a large body of Christian literature in Syriac and Coptic only slightly inferior to that in Latin and Greek, throwing much light upon the history, liturgy, and institutions of the early Church, and as yet, to a large extent, an unworked field. The following lectures do not pretend to serve as a key to Syriac Patristic literature, but merely to furnish a simple introduction from which a person who has not yet commenced the study of the Syriac language may obtain a correct idea of the general character and importance of the Syriac Fathers, and the place they fill in the history of the Christian Church.

DE LACY O'LEARY.

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THE SYRIAC CHURCH AND FATHERS

I

INTRODUCTORY—EARLY HISTORY OF SYRIA

THE Greek name Syria is the equivalent of the Semitic Aram and is thus employed in the Septuagint. Aram itself is derived from a root meaning "rise" and so corresponds with our term "highlands."[1] In this sense it was applied to the hilly district of northern Mesopotamia, the Padan-Aram of the Bible and the centre of the Assyrian Empire, to distinguish it from the low plain of Babylonia. In the Assyrian monuments the name does not ever appear applied to the western lands towards the Mediterranean shores, but it is so used in other Semitic literature and in the Old Testament. In this application Aram stretches from the Mediterranean in the west to the Choatras and Zagros mountains in the east which divide Assyria from Media, but the name was never applied to the southern lands, the plain of Babylonia, the great desert of Asia, or Canaan, nor did its application ever extend to the north of the mountain ranges which formed the southern boundaries of Cappadocia and Armenia. Thus Aram was the temperate district between the torrid climate of Babylonia and the

Name "Syria."

[1] Hebrew obsolete root רום, cf. Arabic ورم, "to swell."

great desert and the cold of Armenia, at least in some seasons of the year. In climate and geographical configuration the whole district has a fairly uniform character. As Assyria formed the eastern and more important part of Aram the Greeks applied to the whole the name of Syria, a corruption, it would seem, of the word Assyria. Under Greek rule the eastern portion was lost, but the political boundary was extended to the south, and finally under the Roman Empire Syria was made to include Palestine. These uses of the name are, however, merely due to political exigencies, and we shall employ the term Syria in the following lectures to represent the territory south of Armenia and Cappadocia, but north of the thirty-fifth parallel of latitude, extending from the Mediterranean on the west to the Tigris on the east, a district which shared a common social life in the Christian era, which fell under the same Hellenizing influences, and in which the extant Syriac literature was chiefly produced. This, it will be noted, does not include Palestine or Damascus, which participated in the more distinctly Semitic civilization of Nabatæa, and does not directly share the Syro-Hellenistic life of the northern Aram.

Early inhabitants of Syria.

The earlier history of Eastern Syria is that of Assyria, a large subject which lies outside our present sphere. That of the western part of Syria is obscure. The earliest inhabitants of which we have any traces were troglodytes or cave-dwellers, and there remain dolmens, menhirs, and rock-tombs of a pre-historic age. The study of these belongs to anthropology rather than to history proper. When definite history commences western Aram appears as divided into a number of petty states, amongst which were many Hittite possessions; indeed it may be gathered from the Assyrian inscriptions that Hittite influence predominated. Amongst the independent states of the south the most important

was Zobah, mentioned in 2 Sam. viii. 4, which, with several other kingdoms, was conquered by David. Israelite dominion in Syria was, however, of short duration, and entirely came to an end at the death of Solomon, when Damascus took the leading place.

About the year B.C. 747 western Syria became a part of the Assyrian Empire, and so remained for about sixty years until all Aram fell under the dominion of Babylon. This continued until Babylon, including all it had obtained from Assyria, was brought under the Persian Empire. During the period of its subordination to Assyria, Babylon, and Persia—a period of 414 years—little is known of the separate history of Syria.

Assyrian rule.

Babylonian rule.

Persian.

When Alexander conquered Persia in B.C. 313 he became master of all the territory from the Mediterranean to the Oxus, but at his death ten years later this empire began to fall to pieces. In the partition which took place amongst his generals in 321, the satrapy of Babylon fell to Seleucus Nicator, but he was not able to establish his authority on a secure basis until nine years later. Until the time of the Mohammedan conquest the inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia reckoned dates from the Seleucid era, beginning with the year B.C. 312, although Seleucus did not assume the title of king until six years later.

Alexander, B.C. 313.

Seleucus, B.C. 312.

By conquest Seleucus extended his kingdom eastwards into Persia, and in 301 added western Syria. He was a great builder and restorer of cities, which were mainly colonized by Greeks, and reproduced in a modified form the free constitution of the cities of Greece, at least so far as concerned municipal affairs. The chief of these, Antioch, was founded in B.C. 300, immediately after the conquest of Syria. The city was built in the valley of the Orontes, between the mountain chains

Antioch founded B.C. 300.

of the Bargylus and Amanus, which run parallel with the coast, and is at the western end of the great northern trade route from India and Central Asia. As soon as this city was built the seat of government was removed thither, and thus the centre of gravity was shifted west of the Euphrates to the land which became more definitely Greek in its character, and to this Greek Syria the territories of Persia, Babylonia, and Mesopotamia became subject. Many other cities besides Antioch were built by Seleucus and his successors—Seleucia, Laodicea, Berœa, Edessa, and others, and these practically Greek colonies became the centre of the Hellenization of Syria. Very few architectural remains are extant, however, of the work of the Seleucid era.

The history of the Seleucidæ falls into three periods: (i) the formation of the Greek kingdom under the earlier kings, B.C. 312–223; (ii) the period of its greatness under the middle kings, 223–164, and (iii) its decline under the later kings, 164–95.

Early Seleucidæ, B.C. 312–223.

The earlier kings were mainly occupied with war against the Ptolemies of Egypt, who had extended their empire to Cœle-Syria and Damascus. Twice during this period Syria was invaded by the Egyptians. After the first of these expeditions it was agreed that Antiochus II, king of Syria (261–246), should divorce his wife Laodice and marry Berenice, daughter of the Egyptian king, the child of this marriage to succeed to both crowns. It was the murder of Antiochus and the infant son of Berenice by the discarded Laodice, and the recognition of her own son Seleucus II as king, that provoked the second Egyptian invasion, in which the whole Seleucid kingdom was plundered as far as Babylon, and after which the country around Seleucia remained an Egyptian possession for several years. About ten years later (256) the eastern portion of Syria revolted under the leadership of the Parthian

Arsaces and a Parthian Empire was formed, over which the Arsacidæ ruled until A.D. 226, when they were displaced by the restored Persian kingdom under the Sassanidæ. This first period of the Seleucid kingdom shows a defensive warfare against the encroachments of the Ptolemies, who were endeavouring to extend their empire northwards into Syria, and the loss of the eastern provinces, which was largely due to the fact that the western position and the absorbing western interests of the Seleucidæ took them entirely out of touch with their Persian and Babylonian provinces.

The second period (B.C. 223–164) shows us the greatness of the Seleucid kings. At first Antiochus III (223–187) drove the Egyptians out of Samaria, but in 217 he suffered a severe defeat at Raphia, near Gaza, and was obliged to purchase peace by renouncing all claim upon Palestine, Damascus, and Phœnicia. The next twelve years were spent in strengthening the eastern frontier against the Parthians.

Middle Seleucidæ, B.C. 223–164.

In 205 Ptolemy Philopator died, leaving the Egyptian crown to a son only five years old. Seizing this opportunity Antiochus made an agreement with Philip V. of Macedon to partition the whole Egyptian Empire, Philip to take Cyrene, Ionia, Thrace, and the islands in the Ægean sea, Antiochus to receive Cyprus, Palestine, Damascus, and Egypt. Palestine and Damascus were at once seized by Antiochus, the Jews, who hated the rule of the Ptolemies, everywhere rising to welcome the Syrians as deliverers. After a short interval the Egyptians recovered Palestine; then in 198 it was again seized by Antiochus, who prepared to advance into Egypt itself. This entirely reversed the state of things which had existed under the previous kings: Syria was not now on the defensive against the encroachments of Egypt, but was planning the

Syria attempts to attack Egypt.

invasion and conquest of Egypt. At this point, however, the extension of the empire of Syria was checked by the intervention of Rome, which forbade the invasion of Egypt. Antiochus had incurred the disfavour of Rome by his alliance with Philip of Macedon, for Philip's endeavour to seize the Egyptian possessions in the Ægean had brought him into conflict with the Rhodian league and with Pergamos, the two great Eastern allies of Rome. At the time Rome had just finished the victorious but exhausting Second Punic War, and, although she had then no plans of conquest in the East, she regarded with great suspicion the growth of Syrian power representing the same hostile Semitic element which had proved so dangerous in Carthage. The empire of the Ptolemies was declining, and so Rome threw her influence on the side of Egypt to check the threatening expansion of Syria.

Roman intervention.

Although this was enough to deter the Syrians from the difficult task of invading Egypt, Antiochus seems to have considered that it would be quite possible to seize the foreign possessions of Egypt which Philip of Macedon had failed to secure, and he seems even to have planned a great imperial expansion westwards. For three years he prepared military and naval supplies, and, in 195, attacked Lydia and projected the invasion of Greece. For the time at least the kingdom of Syria was the rival of Rome in the contest for the supremacy over the Mediterranean. The strength and evident ambition of Antiochus attracted to his court Hannibal, who, after the defeat of the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War, had been exiled from Carthage and saw in Syria a state which might prove a successful rival of Rome. By Hannibal's advice, Antiochus formed a confederacy of anti-Roman states and then pressed forward into Thrace and Greece.

Antiochus plans the invasion of Europe.

Rome declared war in B.C. 191, and by one crushing victory at Thermopylæ compelled the Syrians to evacuate Europe. Next year the consul L. Cornelius Scipio invaded Asia and gained a decisive battle with Antiochus at Magnesia. From the severity of these two defeats, the Seleucid monarchy never recovered, and these attacks had been invited, not so much by the ambitious projects of Antiochus as by resentment at the presence of Hannibal in Asia.

B.C. 191, Thermopylæ.

B.C. 190, Magnesia.

Antiochus was compelled to purchase peace after Magnesia by the surrender of all his possessions in Asia Minor—practically one-third of his kingdom—and by paying all the expenses of the war. Of this he tried to make a jest, expressing gratitude to the Romans for saving him the trouble of governing too large a kingdom, but in reality the blow was severely felt. Two years later he was slain whilst endeavouring to plunder the temple of Bel at Elymais.

Antiochus was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV, who had a reign of twelve years, mainly spent in endeavouring to restore the internal resources of Syria: it is he to whom the Book of Daniel refers as a "raiser of taxes" (Dan. xi. 20), no doubt in allusion to his efforts to discharge the heavy debt still due to Rome. In 175 he was murdered by a discontented noble named Heliodorus, who placed himself upon the throne.

Seleucus IV.

After Magnesia, hostages had been given to Rome as security for the payment of the indemnity, and amongst these was Antiochus, the younger son of Antiochus III. Shortly before his assassination, Seleucus had sent his own son to Rome in exchange for his brother, and the young Antiochus was at Athens, on his way home, when he heard of his uncle's murder. At once he

Antiochus IV.

pressed on his way, was well received in Syria, and, having easily expelled the usurping Heliodorus, assumed the crown as Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). To some extent the new king restored the prestige of Syria, and, although he never recovered Asia, made several expeditions against Egypt with considerable success until Rome interfered in B.C. 168 and declared Egypt a ward of the Senate.

Attempt to Hellenize Syria.

The great importance of the reign of Antiochus IV lay in his endeavour to Hellenize Syria. The period of his captivity in Rome had brought him into contact with the culture and literature of Greece, then beginning to exercise a profound influence over the Roman mind, and he determined to enforce Greek civilization in his own kingdom, and especially to adapt the native religions to one Hellenic type. In northern Syria his effort was successful, but the attempt to force Greek religious forms upon the Jews, the erection of an altar to Zeus in the court of the Temple at Jerusalem, the wholesale destruction of copies of the scriptures, and the ferocious persecution of all who adhered to the Mosaic law, aroused a national resistance under the leadership of the Maccabees, and finally resulted in the formation of an independent Jewish state under the protection of Rome. Antiochus' persecution was the stimulus which produced this new national life and inspired the religious revival of the Pharisaic movement.

Close of second period.

The death of Antiochus IV in 164, on his way to invade Parthia, marks the close of the second period of the history of the Seleucidæ, a period which was marked by imperial aspirations in Syria and sees the opposition of the Ptolemies in Egypt replaced by that of the Romans, who were being gradually drawn into interference in the affairs of the East. Syria was now curtailed on the east by the formation of the Parthian Empire, on the south

by the independent state of Judæa, and on the north-west by the surrender of the Asiatic possessions after Magnesia.

Antiochus Epiphanes was succeeded by his son Antiochus V (Eupator), but there was a rival in Philip, the late king's foster-brother and favourite. Indeed from this time forward there is rarely an undisputed succession. The one important event of this reign was an attack upon Jerusalem which probably would have put an end to the Jewish revolt, but at the critical moment Antiochus had to raise the siege in order to meet Philip, who had established himself at Antioch. Philip was overcome, but a more dangerous rival appeared in Demetrius Soter.

Decline of the Seleucidæ.
Antiochus V.
Civil War.

It has already been noted that Seleucus IV had sent his son Demetrius to Rome in exchange for his younger brother Antiochus. At Rome the young Demetrius became the warm friend of the historian Polybius. At the death of Antiochus IV he asked to be allowed to return to Syria, but the Senate refused. By the advice of Polybius he soon afterwards left Rome secretly and landed at Tripolis in Phœnicia: the Roman Senate deciding not to interfere when they heard of his flight. Syria rose in his favour, and Antiochus was captured and put to death, and thus Demetrius became king. During his reign Judæa was finally lost. For some time Demetrius cultivated friendly relations with Rome, but at last these were broken by his interference in Cappadocia. Rome wished to see a number of small kingdoms outside her dominions and steadily opposed any attempt of one state to control or interfere in another. Meanwhile Demetrius had alienated his own subjects by reckless personal extravagance, and the Romans seized this opportunity to bring forward another claimant to the Syrian throne in the person of

Demetrius.
B.C. 162.

Alexander Balas. Alexander claimed to be the natural son of Antiochus IV, but he appears to have been simply an impostor. Rome's support was gained by scandalous intrigues of which Polybius gives an account (Polyb. xxxiii. 14, 16), and was followed by the assistance of Egypt, Pergamos, and Cappadocia. After two years' civil strife, a decisive battle was fought in 150, in which Demetrius was slain and Alexander was left to assume the royal diadem.

Alexander Balas, 152.

Alexander Balas having made himself king, laid everything aside to follow a life of self-indulgence and luxury, and estranged his subjects in exactly the same manner as his predecessor. After a reign of three years he also was confronted with a rival, Demetrius Nicator, the son of Antiochus V. Nicator landed in Syria and quickly gained the support of the Syrians. Alexander, however, was still supported by the Jews and by the king of Egypt, who marched up to his support. As soon as the Egyptian army reached Syria it at once declared in favour of Nicator, and Alexander, compelled to fight with those whom he had supposed to be his allies, was defeated and fled to Arabia, where he was murdered soon afterwards.

150.

Demetrius II.

Demetrius II (Nicator) reigned for nine years and then invaded the Parthian Empire, where he was defeated and taken prisoner by King Arsaces. At this Antiochus VI (Sidetes), a younger brother of the captive king, assumed the Syrian crown. At first, indeed, he had to contend with an usurper Tryphon, who had seized the throne at the first news of Demetrius' defeat. After disposing of Tryphon, Antiochus made an expedition against Judæa, the real result of which is unknown : Josephus says that he made honourable terms with the Jews and retired (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.* xiii. 8), whilst Porphyry (in Euseb., *Chron. Armen.* i.

146.

137.

349) states that he destroyed the walls of Jerusalem and slaughtered many of the inhabitants. After this he turned to invade Parthia, where his elder brother was still living in easy captivity, married to Arsaces' daughter. The Parthian king entrusted his army to the captive Demetrius with the result that Antiochus was defeated and Demetrius again became king of Syria, where he reigned for three years more.

128.

125.

At the death of the restored king there was again civil war between Antiochus Gryphus and his half-brother Antiochus Cyzenicus. After thirteen years the kingdom was divided, Cyzenicus receiving the southern part, Gryphus the northern. Sixteen years later war was renewed at the assassination of Gryphus, when Cyzenicus tried to seize the whole, but was opposed by Gryphus' son, Seleucus Epiphanes. At Cyzenicus' death the struggle was continued by his son Antiochus Eusebes, who defeated Seleucus, and then continued the contest with Antiochus Epiphanes, another son of Gryphus, and then with yet another son named Dionysius. After more than twenty years' civil war and disorder, the Syrians begged Tigranes, king of Armenia, to come to their rescue, and thus Syria became a dependency of Armenia, and so remained until Tigranes was defeated by the Romans in B.C. 96.

Civil War.

112.

But there were other causes besides civil war which produced misery in the later days of Seleucid rule.

The long barren strip of land which stretches from Arabia to the Euphrates, the Great Desert of Asia, the wilderness through part of which the Israelites wandered when they went out from Egypt, and at whose western edge John the Baptist lived and taught, has been from time immemorial the home of the Beduin tribes, who claim descent from Ishmael, and whose own tradition of their progenitor is probably embodied in the prophecy:

The Beduin tribes.

"he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. xvi. 12). At a later date, it was these same Beduins who brought about the downfall of the Roman Empire in the East. More than once we shall have occasion to note how, whenever there was a weak government in Syria, plundering hordes of Beduins overran the land. It is the same in modern as in ancient times. Some of these tribes made settlements which afterwards became independent kingdoms, but for the most part they remained nomadic plunderers.

Foundation of Edessa.

The most important of the Beduin kingdoms was that of Osrhœne, where Abgar, the Emir of the Mardani tribe, established himself in the city of Edessa, and where his dynasty ruled until A.D. 216.

The lands which fell to Beduin chiefs strong enough to keep out all other plunderers were fortunate; some of the large towns also enjoyed a partial security within strongly built walls; but the greater part of Syria passively endured annual inroads of Beduin brigands, whilst some of the Greek colonists themselves turned robbers, and only differed from the Beduins in being permanently present in the country. In the south the Jews captured several towns, and at one time it even seemed possible that Syria might become a foreign possession of the Priesthood at Jerusalem. Portions of the south-west were occupied by the Nabatæans, who had established an empire in northern Arabia, and, unlike the Beduins, formed there a prosperous commercial community.

Beduin raids accentuated the need of a strong government when Syria, weary at the long series of civil wars, placed itself under the protection of Armenia. The brief rule of the last Seleucid, with two rival claimants, was a final proof of incompetence.

Such was the state of affairs in B.C. 70, and it seemed that disorder could go no further, when Rome finally

interfered. It was the need of suppressing Cilician pirates and opposing the growing power of Pontus under King Mithridates that led the Roman arms eastwards. After the fall of Mithridates (B.C. 64) Pompey entered Syria, and spent there a whole winter in reducing the country to order. One of the three Seleucid titular kings asked for Roman recognition, but, fortunately for Syria, Pompey replied that Rome refused to recognize a king who had shown himself unable to enforce his authority. At the same time the Jews and Nabatæans were restrained from interference.

Annexation by Rome.

This begins what may be justly described as the golden age of Syria. To-day the whole land is covered with deserted cities, temples, and mansions, almost entirely the remains of the Roman occupation. Owing to the lawless condition, with which the Turkish Government has proved itself unable to cope, Syria is a little visited country; but under the late Emperor Napoleon III, who, whatever were his defects, was certainly a munificent and discriminating patron of exploration and archæology, it was visited by Count de Vogué and M. Waddington, the gifted Englishman who became one of Napoleon's most diligent servants. The results of their explorations have been published in the superbly illustrated, though unfortunately most costly work, De Vogué's *Central Syria, its Civil and Religious Architecture*, and in Le Bas and Waddington's *Voyage Archéologique*.

Prosperity of Syria under Roman rule.

In Syria the classic architecture of Greece and Rome took a new development owing to the extreme scarcity of wood in that country, which compelled the Syrian architects to employ stone, and so to make an increased use of the arch, and thus develop the system of roofing in buildings with cupolas. The cupola, the arched vault, and the bell tower are all features of Syrian origin, and so it is to Syria that

Architecture.

we must trace much of the Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture. When Justini was planning to build the great cathedral of St. Sophia at Constantinople, it was from Syria that he obtained his architects.

Expansion of Rome.

At first the Roman province of Syria was strictly coterminous with the Seleucid kingdom, and had its capital at Antioch, but it gradually extended until under Diocletian there were nine provinces grouped under Syria, although only the first three—Cœle-Syria, with capital Antioch; Syria Secunda, with capital Apamæa, and Euphratensis, with capital Hierapolis—were truly Syrian: the remainder included divisions of Phœnicia, Palestine and Arabia, which Rome included under one general designation. At first Roman authority extended only to the Euphrates. Beyond this lay the Beduin kingdom of Edessa, with which Rome formed an alliance, but left it independent. Further east lay the empire of Parthia. North and south were other more or less dependent states which were all gradually drawn into the Roman Empire. Of these the first to forfeit its separate existence was Judæa, the inhabitants, weary of the rule of the Idumæan Herods, themselves pleading to be taken into the Empire of which they soon became the most troublesome subjects. Of the other kingdoms Commagene was incorporated in the Empire in A.D. 72, Abila in 49, Chalcis in 92, and Palmyra some time during the reign of Augustus. Thus the two great states of Rome and Parthia were left facing one another, and fought out a prolonged conflict with varying success until the Arab tribes were united under the influence of Mohammed and expelled both from western Asia. During this contest both Powers with their rival types of civilization were in intimate contact with Syria, and here too they both first met the revived Semitic element marshalled by Islam.

Under the Seleucidæ Syriac had become the official

language of all western Asia, and gradually came to be called by the later name of Syriac or Sursi.[1] The popular use of Syriac spread through Palestine, leaving a marked impress on the later Hebrew, and even extended into Egypt, but gradually fell back before Hellenistic Greek, which had its origin in Rakotis, and gradually spread round the eastern and northern shores of the Mediterranean. The Seleucidæ always used Greek for certain political and military titles, but the colonists who had settled under the early successors of Seleucus Nicator gradually fell under Semitic influences, and, although preserving differences which distinguished them from the surrounding native Syrians, moved very far away from the type of Hellas. The growth of Hellenistic Greek as the general language of the Levant did much to draw back these cities to contact with Greek life, but it was the life of Græco-Roman conditions, not that of the older Greece. Syriac and Greek.

The Greek rule of the Seleucidæ had lasted rather more than two centuries; its career under Roman dominion lasted nearly seven centuries; then came a short period of Persian conquest and re-asserted Roman authority, and the Mohammedan conquest in A.D. 636. The subsequent history of Syria is not without interest, but that most valuable for the student of the history of the later Roman Empire, and for the ecclesiastical historian, terminates at the Mohammedan conquest.

Of the pre-Roman period no literary remains are extant. The history of the earlier centuries of the Christian era must be sought in Greek authorities, even Syrian writers of the period using Greek. Gradually a Syriac literature grew up to the east of the Greek-speaking element Syriac literature.

[1] (סורסי *T. Bab. Sotah.* 49 b.) instead of the older term Aramaic or Arami (ארמי), the latter being now confined to the southern dialect of Babylonia.

but this native literature was mainly associated with the church life of Syria, and so was found in the monasteries of Egypt as well as in those of Syria, for there was a close contact between the two countries so far as regards the monastic life, and in the Far East where the Nestorian missionaries penetrated. In course of time Syriac was replaced by Arabic as a medium of literary composition, but it remained the language of the oriental, that is, eastern Asiatic, liturgies.

Modern missions.

Until quite recent years Syria was little visited by western travellers, but conditions of travelling have now improved. At present there are three groups of missionaries working in Syria, and much information as to present conditions can be obtained through their medium. The first is the Roman Catholic mission, which is in two sections, that of the Dominicans at Mosul who are in touch with the Nestorians, and the Jesuit mission at Beyrut. The second is also a Presbyterian mission with head-quarters at Tabriz. In addition to these there is an English mission which works with the full recognition and support of the native Nestorian bishops and endeavours to assist the native church, more particularly by educating candidates for Holy Orders and others. A short but interesting account of the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians," as it is called, will be found in a sixpenny pamphlet by Mr. Athelstan Riley, published by the S.P.C.K.

II

SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN SYRIA

BEFORE considering the actual work of the Syriac Fathers we are endeavouring to understand the conditions of life and thought under which their labours took place. The previous chapter briefly described the manner in which Syria was brought into contact with Hellenic civilization and became a part of the Roman Empire. It will now be necessary to note the manner in which Christianity was introduced.

The earliest history of the Church is contained in the Acts of the Apostles, and there Antioch already appears as a great centre of Christian life. We read that, after the death of St. Stephen, some of those who were compelled to leave Jerusalem to escape persecution, travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, "preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."[1] This places the first foundation of a Church at Antioch within some ten years after the birth of the Church of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and in the earlier period of the activity of the Apostles.

Foundation of the Church of Antioch.

The Acts then inform us of what reads like a second foundation of the Antiochene Church. Immediately after describing the preaching "unto the Jews only" the text continues, "and some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they

[1] Acts xi. 19.

were come to Antioch, spake also unto the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus."[1] From this we gather that there first arrived certain Judæan Christians who retained the racial exclusiveness of the Jew, a type long characteristic of the Judæan Church, and that, a little later, these were followed by some Hellenistic converts from Cyprus and Cyrene, who had already grasped that broader spirit of Christianity which ignored all differences of race and class, a thing largely aided by the experience of the wider world in which the Hellenist moved as contrasted with the confined surroundings of Judæa. These Hellenistic converts preached to Greeks, that is, to heathens, as well as to Jews, and thus the Antiochene Church was the first to take a definitely Gentile colour.

Prosperity of the Church of Antioch.

The narrative continues to relate that the Apostles who remained in Jerusalem sent down Barnabas to Antioch, and that he invited thither the recently converted Saul (St. Paul). Barnabas himself was a native of Cyprus, and so had the wider education of the Hellenistic Jew, and Paul quickly identified himself with the broader tone of Antioch. After a little while the Antiochene Church had so far become of importance that the Gentile inhabitants of the city began to distinguish its members by the name of "Christians."[2] Other things also point to the prosperity of the Church of Antioch. When a famine arose—about the year 45, it would appear—Antioch was able to send relief to the poorer community in Jerusalem (Acts xi. 27–30),

[1] Acts xi. 20; the reading ἐλάλουν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἕλληνας seems to give the correct form.

[2] This name was not at first used by the Church itself, whose members called themselves "brethren," "disciples," or "saints." It was certainly not applied by the Jews, who would have been unwilling to give a name which signified "followers of the Messiah," and who preferred to use the term "Nazarenes." Its Gentile origin is implied in 1 Pet. iv. 16.

and it was Antioch which took the lead in systematic missionary work (Acts xiii. 1–3).

Although we cannot accept the exaggerated picture of Baur, it seems that there were two leading parties in the early Church—the Judaistic section which emphasized the continuity between the older dispensation and the new, and wished to retain the Mosaic law in its entirety, and those who more fully grasped the broader spirit now introduced. Jerusalem was the centre of the Judaistic party, and we read that at Antioch "certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts xv. 1). This led to an appeal from Antioch to Jerusalem, probably not so much because there was any supremacy of Jerusalem recognized, as because most of the Apostles appear to have been at Jerusalem. It is true that the Antiochene liturgy describes Jerusalem "as the mother of all Churches" (Brightman, *Eastern Liturg.*, p. 54), but there seems reason to believe that this view dates from a later age, when Jerusalem had become a place of pilgrimage. The result of this appeal was that a synod was assembled at Jerusalem which decided that circumcision should not be imposed on Gentile converts. Although this was a defeat of the Judaistic party within the Church, that party continued to be an element of considerable importance, especially at Jerusalem where the large majority of the Christain community was drawn from the Jews.

Divisions of early Christianity.

Judaistic party strong in Jerusalem.

Under a purely secular government the Church at Antioch seems to have been free from the frequent persecutions which fell upon the Church in Jerusalem, not only from the priestly rulers of the city, but from the increasing fanaticism of the populace which marked the last days of Jerusalem. At Antioch, moreover, the Church

Reasons why Antioch was more liberal.

was exempt from the rigid conservatism of the Judaistic party dominant in Judæa. Besides this there is no evidence that the Syrian Church ever attempted that communism which was, no doubt, mainly responsible for the dire poverty of the "brethren which dwelt in Judæa."

Decline of the Church of Jerusalem.

The fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 entirely removed the Church of Jerusalem from the first rank of Christian communities, and soon after it became a mere appanage of the Syrian Church, owing mainly to the fact that in A.D. 100 the civil government made Judæa and Palestine part of the province of Syria, whose capital was at Antioch, and there was a general tendency to admit the primacy of the Church of the ruling town of a province.

Judaistic section.

The Judaistic party continued to be of importance, but after the fall of Jerusalem it separated from the direct communion of the Church and survived in the form of the Ebionite sects; it is possible, indeed, that its numbers were swelled by many Jews of more moderate views. The Ebionite sects were strongest in Judæa and Syria, and it is from these districts that Ebionite literature seems to take its origin. Apparently there was a revival of Ebionitism about the end of the second century, when the *Book of Elkesai* appeared, and inspired the circle of Clementine legends which figure in the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* which bear Clement's name.[1] These are the works which suggested the theories of the Tübingen school, and they certainly do prove the continued and vigorous existence of a Judaistic Christianity within the province of Syria. Indeed, it is a curious phenomenon, and one that has not as yet received much attention, that even so late as the fourth century Judaism exer-

[1] Cf. Bigg, Clementine Homilies, in *Studia Biblica*, II. Oxford, 1890.

cised an influence on Christianity. The natural assumption, based on the bitterness of feeling between the Church and the Synagogue, is that they kept absolutely apart; but in Syria at least we see evidences of quite late intercourse. The Apostolical Constitutions, a fourth century compilation from the older Didascalia, contains its most Judaistic features in the fourth century interpolations. St. Chrysostom, whose Antiochene writings date from the period 370–398, finds it necessary to rebuke the tendency of Christians to frequent Jewish services and keep Jewish feasts; Dorotheus, a little earlier, is proof of Hebrew scholarship existing in the Syrian Church. It is doubtful whether we can speak of such Jewish influences elsewhere than in the civil province of Syria. It seems that the Judaistic tone had its home in Judæa, and only gradually spread northwards and invaded the Syrian Church. The presence of large numbers of Jews in a town does not of necessity imply that there was a Judaistic influence at work in the Church there.

So far the Antiochene Church which we have been describing was a Greek-speaking Church. In Syria, as elsewhere, Christianity was promulgated amongst the Greek-speaking population in the dialect of Greek which was the medium of commercial intercourse in the Levant, and which is known to us from the Greek papyri which have been discovered in Egypt. During the first age of the Church it seems to have been exclusively Greek-speaking. This was true of Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and elsewhere. The letters of Clement of Rome, and of Ignatius of Antioch, are alike in Greek; the oldest Christian inscriptions in the Roman catacombs are in Greek; and the earliest liturgical remains of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch bear evidence to a Greek form of liturgy. Latin

Church at Antioch, Greek-speaking.

Christianity began when missionaries passed over into Africa, and in Africa, it appears, the first Latin versions of the Scriptures arose. As the Latin Church of Africa derived its teaching from the Greek Church of Rome, so Coptic Christianity traced its origin to the Greek Church of Alexandria, and Syriac Christianity to the Greek Church of Antioch. Thus it is impossible to ignore the life of the Greek Syrian Church when considering the Syriac Fathers.

Importance of Antioch.

Antioch was one of the great centres of Christian life already in the age of the Apostles, and this prominent position it retained to the time of the Mohammedan conquest in the seventh century. Its intellectual life did not quite equal that of Alexandria, nor did its political importance altogether rival that of Byzantium or Rome; but if not the first, it was yet within the first rank. In the sub-Apostolic age its pre-eminence was maintained by the great name of St. Ignatius, by its vigour in missionary enterprise, and by the increasing political importance of the city of Antioch and of the province of Syria.

Three stages of Hellenization.

In the preliminary remarks which have so far occupied our attention we have noted the Hellenization of Syria gradually taking place in three distinct yet related movements—in the first place, the introduction of Hellenic civilization by the Seleucid kings; then its further spread under Roman rule, especially due to the fact that Western Syria was brought into intimate political and commercial contact with the common life of the Eastern Mediterranean; and, thirdly, the influence of Christianity, which came through a Greek medium. In Syria, however, different from Egypt of the West, there was the counter influence of a powerful rival civilization—that of Persia—thrusting in the opposite direction.

In every case it seems that Christianity remained

Greek so long as it centred in the commercial towns: the vernacular churches arose as Christianity spread outwards from the Levant amongst the inland population. In Syria the Greek-speaking Church centred in Antioch, but gradually there arose a Syriac-speaking Church, which gathered, not in the Roman province of Syria, but eastwards, in Mesopotamia and Persia.

Native Syriac Church east of the Euphrates.

Our first view of a Syriac, as distinguished from a Greek-Syrian, Church is in the Beduin kingdom of Edessa. We have no certain knowledge as to the manner in which Christianity spread inland. Eusebius, at the end of the first book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, gives three very curious documents—(1) a letter from the Abgar of Edessa to Christ asking that our Lord would visit Edessa and heal him of a disease from which he suffered, and professing faith in His Deity; (2) a short reply from Christ, commending the faith of Abgar because he had believed although he had not seen, and promising to send a teacher; (3) a narrative of how Addai, whose name is also rendered Thaddæus, went to Edessa after the Ascension and founded a Church there. Eusebius affirms that he himself had seen the Syriac originals of these three documents, and this was long believed to be a striking proof of Eusebius' lack of veracity. In 1864, however, Dr. Cureton published (in his *Ancient Syriac Documents*) the actual text, which he had discovered in part in two MSS. brought from the Nitrian desert in Egypt, where the monks seem to have devoted themselves to Syriac literature (now Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS. 14644, 14645); three years later Langlois (*Collect. des histoires anc. et mod. de l'Arménie*, tom. I.) published the full text in an Armenian translation, the significance of which will be seen when we remember that the Armenian Church is a daughter of the Syrian; and, finally, in 1876, Mr. Phillips published the whole

Edessa.

Legend of Addai.

Syriac text from a MS. at St. Petersburg. It appears, therefore, that Eusebius acted in all good faith, accepting documents extant in the Church at Edessa as authentic. There was a time when every important Church considered it necessary to trace its foundation to an Apostle, or an immediate follower of the Apostles, and this motive probably accounts for these three documents, which are amongst the earliest apocryphal literature extant. The legend of Addai appears as well in the *Doctrina Addai* (also in Cureton *lib. cit.*), a work probably a little later than Eusebius.

However Christianity may have reached Edessa, the Edessene *Chronicle* notes that in A.D. 203, when the River Daisan overflowed it injured a Christian temple, so it was evidently fully established at the commencement of the third century. It is about this same date that we are able to commence a more detailed study of Syrian history by means of a native Syriac literature. At this time the Church of Antioch in Western Syria had been more than a century in existence, and had been largely responsible for the foundation of Churches in Asia Minor, and even in Gaul, for there was a great trade route between Antioch and Marseilles, and even in the time of St. Jerome there was a Syriac-speaking element in the great trading towns along the Rhone. Seeing, then, the great missionary activity of the Antiochene Church, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the gospel was carried eastwards along the great trade route through Central Asia to India, and that it was thus that it reached Edessa. The comparative study of Liturgies shows an exclusively Antiochene rite in use in the Syriac and Asiatic Churches.

Christianity at Edessa in A.D. 203.

Evidently spread eastwards from Antioch.

We have now arrived at the end of the second century, and at that period the Church of Antioch was one of the great centres of Christian life, and had through missionary enterprise spread its influence

far to the west and east, and had, amongst other daughter Churches, a vernacular-speaking Syriac community whose life centred at Edessa. We must now endeavour to bring forward the political history to the same date.

Northern Syria gave little trouble to the Roman Government; it had the best of reasons for a quiet and uneventful career in the exceptional commercial prosperity it enjoyed and in its rapid increase in wealth and luxury. The troubles lay beyond the limits of the original province. In the first century these were especially in Palestine. The Jewish problem culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and thirty years later Judæa was added to the province of Syria. In 106 the Nabatæans on the south-east were conquered and a large part of their territory was formed into a new province which was named Arabia, whilst their northernmost possession, Damascus, was annexed to Syria. Thus Syria became a very large province indeed.

Judæa and Damascus.

Whilst Judæa and Nabatæa were thus disposed of, there was another territory, Armenia, which was a standing difficulty as long as the Roman power endured in Asia, and has proved hardly less difficult to the Turkish Government since. Armenia is itself a wild and mountainous region to the north-east of Syria, proverbial in Latin poetry for the extreme rigour of its winters, and inhabited by a race which stands out in history as exceptionally warlike. For seven hundred years this land was the battle ground between Rome and Persia.

Armenia.

Early in the second century Parthia was threatening the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. In A.D. 114 Trajan, one of the ablest of the emperors, wintered in Antioch and made preparations for the conquest of Parthia. In 115 he conquered Armenia and then Mesopotamia, adding both as provinces to

Parthia.

Trajan.

the Empire, and returned to winter again at Antioch. Next year he invaded Parthia, took the capital Ctesiphon, from which the Parthian king Kushru escaped, and made western Parthia a province under the name of Assyria. In the midst of the conquest of Parthia he was recalled by the news of the revolt of Mesopotamia, the Jews being the instigators and leaders of the rebellion. With some difficulty this was put down and severely punished, Edessa, which had been one of the centres of revolt, being burned.

Hadrian, A.D. 117.

Trajan's conquests were, however, of brief duration. Next year (117) he died, and his successor Hadrian, who disapproved of his policy of extension as being too burdensome to the Empire, relinquished his conquests.

In the reign of Marcus Aurelius new difficulties arose. The Parthian king Vologeses was an able

Marcus Aurelius.

and efficient ruler, and, after thoroughly reforming the internal administration of his own kingdom, he determined to extend its borders. For this purpose he sent a Parthian army into Armenia and placed Pacorus, one of his own household, upon the Armenian throne. The Roman governor of Cappadocia sent a legion to expel the Parthians, as Armenia was now supposed to be a neutral border state, but this legion was cut to pieces. The Parthians then invaded Syria and the Romans were again defeated. Thus Marcus Aurelius, in undertaking a Parthian war, was making no attempt to imitate Trajan's policy of conquest, but was compelled to resist the Power which threatened to cut off Syria, the richest and most prosperous province of the whole Roman Empire. He had no desire for war, but every proposal of peace was

162.

rejected by the Parthian king, and so, in 162, a conflict was forced upon Rome. The war was entrusted to Lucius Verus, the Imperial Colleague, but he preferred to spend his time in the

amusements of Antioch whilst the campaign was conducted by subordinate generals. One of these expelled Pacorus from Armenia and established a Roman nominee Sohæmus in his place, thus again making Armenia subordinate to the Roman authority. Another general, Avidius Cassius, made a successful incursion into Parthia and made the Bed-
uin kingdom of Edessa similarly sub- 164-5.
ordinate. But although both these generals had inflicted a severe check on Parthia, the operations proved of the most disastrous character to the Romans, for the army returning from Mesopotamia brought back one of those mysterious diseases which, under the name of "plague," have from time to time swept westward from Asia. Of this plague we do not possess the same detailed account as of that in the days of Thucydides, or of the mediæval "Black Death," but it probably was a pestilence of the same character, the "bubonic plague" which, for centuries past, has made its home in the far East.[1]

This visitation was followed by the revolt of Cassius, whom the Emperor had left as governor of Syria, but as Cassius was detested by the soldiers he
was promptly murdered, and the only 175.
result of the abortive rebellion was that Marcus Aurelius visited Syria for the first time in person.

The next event of political moment in Syria took place in 193, when, after the murder of the Emperor Pertinax by his guards, the Syrian gover-
nor Niger assumed the purple. He was 193.
no match; however, for the rival claimant Severus, and was defeated after four years' civil war, caused not so much by Niger as by a western competitor Albinus. In fact, Syria was not military, and, however ambitious its governors might be, they were never able to hold their own against the more warlike

[1] *Vide* Dr. C. Creighton, *Epidemics of the Middle Ages.*

legions of the West, such as the army of Illyria which supported Severus.

After the death of Severus in 211 the imperial power fell to his two sons, Caracalla and Geta. For some months there was subdued hostility between these two, then Caracalla slew his brother and ruled alone. It was now forty years since the last conflict with Parthia, and the Parthians were once more beginning to menace the eastern frontier, so in 215 Caracalla visited Antioch and commenced preparations for the invasion of Parthia, setting out in the following year. The winter of 216 was spent at Edessa, where at the time Bar-Manu was Abgar. It has been usual to claim this Bar-Manu as a Christian, but this is very doubtful, indeed the whole history of the Beduin kings of Edessa is confused and uncertain; but if not actually a Christian, Bar-Manu treated Christianity with marked favour, so that there was an opposition pagan party formed among the discontented nobles. With this opposition Caracalla allied himself, and, having got Bar-Manu into his power, threw him into chains and sent him a prisoner to Rome. He did not, however, appoint a new Abgar from the opposition party, as was no doubt anticipated, but reduced the kingdom of Edessa to complete subjection and added it to the province of Syria, and it remained a part of Syria until the time of the Mohammedan conquest. Either Hellenic influence was now wearing out, or Edessa was too far east, but this new addition to the Empire was never completely Hellenized, but became the centre of a revival of Semitic thought and culture which began the work of disintegration in Asia and prepared the way for Islam.

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215.

216.

Bar-Manu.

Fall of Edessa.

The fall of the throne of Edessa is of particular

interest to the student of Syriac literature, because under Bar-Manu arose the one school of Syriac philosophy which cannot be directly traced to a Hellenistic source.

About the year 155 was born Bar-Daisan, or Bardesanes, the child of heathen parents presumably of high rank, for Bar-Daisan's childhood was spent with the Bar-Manu who afterwards became Abgar. Bar-Daisan was educated as an astrologer, but became a Christian, though we have no information as to the date or circumstances of his conversion. He was the chief favourite of Bar-Manu, and this may probably be connected with the prosperity of Christianity at that period in Edessa. Epiphanius (*Haer.*, iv. 77) speaks of Bar-Daisan as a confessor, and we may perhaps connect this with the ascendency of the pagan opposition during Caracalla's stay at Edessa. After the fall of the Beduin state Bar-Daisan went to Armenia, where he tried to spread the Christian religion, but could obtain no success, so he ceased his attempt at missionary work and retired to Ani, where he spent his time in translating the temple records from Armenian into Syriac. This *History of Armenia* was afterwards rendered into Greek and is quoted by Moses of Chorene, but the actual text is now lost. He is also said to have written treatises defending the Christian religion against pagans and against the teachings of Marcion, but none of these are now known to exist. It is also stated that he and his son Harmonius composed hymns which were still popular in the days of Ephrem, and there is reason to believe that some of the metrical passages preserved in the apocryphal *Acts of St. Thomas* and elsewhere are taken from these hymns. The later years of his life were passed in the study of the Hindu religion, upon which he wrote *Hypomnemata*

Bar-Daisan.

Indica, a work now lost, but twice quoted by the Neoplatonist Porphyry. The source of Bar-Daisan's information on this subject seems to have been an Indian embassy which visited the Emperor Elagabalus, the great central Asiatic route from India to the west passing through Carrhæ, only twenty miles distant from Edessa.

Book of the Laws of Countries.

But our chief interest in Bar-Daisan centres in a work known as *Kethaba de-Namose d'Athrawatha*, or *Book of the Laws of Countries*, the composition, it appears, of his disciple Philip. Until 1855 this book was only known in the occasional references of Greek and Latin writers and in one long extract preserved by Eusebius in his *Præparatio Evangelica*. In that year, however, Dr. Cureton published the full Syriac text (in his *Spicel. Syriacum*), taken from one of the MSS. brought from the Nitrian desert in Egypt (now Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 14658). The work is in the form of a dialogue between Bar-Daisan and his disciples Awida, Philip, and others. The chief subject discussed is the question of predestination and free-will. Bar-Daisan opposes both the Chaldee belief that all life is ruled by the seven planets, the astrological theory in which he had been educated, and the opposite opinion that human conduct is altogether free. He maintains that there are three distinct things, each in its own sphere, Nature, Destiny, and Free-will. "Nature" is responsible for the form and character of our material body, its physical condition, size, colour, etc. To "Destiny" he ascribes the external events which bring about disease or health, poverty or wealth; whilst Free-will extends to everything outside the spheres of Nature and Destiny. As Destiny is inevitable, no precautions could avoid disease or misfortune. Although this seems to approach fatalism, it must not be forgotten that it

Subject of the work.

greatly modifies the severer fatalism of the Chaldæan astrologers amongst whom Bar-Daisan had been educated; they considered that every event of life was ruled by destiny, whilst Bar-Daisan strictly limited its control to external accidents. A large part of the work is occupied in proving, contrary to Chaldee opinion, that there is room for free-will outside the spheres ruled by Nature and Destiny, and this is argued by citing the divergence of laws and customs in various nations, and the alterations made in these by men according to their own discretion, thus proving that they are not impressed by any external compulsion. The title of the work, *Book of the Laws of Nations*, is due to the collection of instances of peculiar laws and customs, a collection which throws great light upon Semitic society in the early years of the Christian era.

The Chaldæan astrologers considered that the various nations of the earth fell into seven zones, each ruled by one of the seven planets, and that differences of customs were to be ascribed to these planetary influences. This Bar-Daisan refutes by noting how kings and governments have deliberately changed laws, so that they cannot be enforced by destiny; and also by showing that there are people in one locality who agree with others living in remote territories, thus disproving the idea of distinct "zones"; especially, he says, is this the case with "the new race, consisting of ourselves who are called Christians, whom in every place and in every land Christ established at His coming."

Was Bar-Daisan an astrologer after his conversion?

The most surprising part is that Bar-Daisan, though a Christian, still held the astrological theory that Destiny, so far as it extended, was the work of the seven planets. This is not clearly stated in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, but is asserted by Diodorus of Tarsus, who,

in the fourth century, wrote a treatise against the doctrines of Bar-Daisan, which were still popular in Mesopotamia; it may be that this does not fairly represent Bar-Daisan's views, but was due to his followers living in a land where astrology continued a very real influence.

Was he a Gnostic?

Bar-Daisan is frequently described as "the last of the Gnostics." How far this is a true description must be a matter of opinion; if Gnosticism be taken in its widest sense to include every type of thought where Christianity mingled with oriental pagan teaching, we may so classify him, but a title used in so vague a sense is of very little use for classification. If we take Gnosticism to imply some scheme of æons or generations connecting the supreme Being with the Creator of the world, we cannot prove Gnosticism from the *Book of the Laws of Nations*. There Bar-Daisan speaks of the orders of creation as angels, rulers, governors, elements, men, and animals, but this is entirely different from a hierarchy of spiritual beings intervening between God and the Demiurge which is characteristic of true Gnostic speculation. The description of Bar-Daisan as a Gnostic is due to Greek writers who may have derived their information from his followers, or from works now lost, or may have misunderstood his references to angels, etc., and to the planets, and so confused his teaching with the Gnostic theory of æons.

Nothing is more difficult and obscure than tracing out the various phases of Gnostic thought, in which several oriental elements seem to have filtered through different media. But, so far as direct evidence extends, Bar-Daisan's teaching seems to have retained some elements of Chaldæan astrology in a form peculiar to himself, and not to have possessed any characteristics which enable us to classify him with the great leaders of Gnostic thought and *Book*

of the Laws of Nations in vol. II. of Graffin's *Patrol. Syr.*, Paris, 1907.

Bar-Daisan lived during the last years of the independence of Edessa. With the incorporation of the Beduin state in the Roman Empire its independent thought also seems to have come to an end, and no further literary effort is known until inspiration came from the West, and especially from the Antiochene Church. In the next chapter, therefore, we must return to the history of that Church so far as it throws light upon Syriac literature.

III

THE SCHOOL OF ANTIOCH

THE fall of Edessa and the extension of the Roman frontier to the Tigris caused the intellectual as well as the political life of Syria to converge on Antioch. The short-lived literary outburst of Bar-Daisan and his disciples had no immediate followers: once more the eastern Syriac-speaking population sinks into obscurity, until it is awakened by influences from the West. Before this takes place, however, there was a literary and theological development in Antioch which produced great influence on the subsequent life of Syria, and which it will, therefore, be necessary for us to trace. This centred round the formation of a school of Christian philosophy at Antioch in conscious imitation of the school of Alexandria, and clearly shows the intellectual prominence of Christianity and its teachers in Syria.

Importance of Antioch.

Although the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, at least in systematic form, had its nucleus at Antioch as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gnostic heresy seems also to have proceeded from the Syrian capital, the richer intellectual life of Alexandria seems to have produced a much fuller development both of doctrine and of heresy. The peculiar circumstances of the Church of Alexandria, and especially the interest taken in that city in every new form of religious or

School of Alexandria.

philosophical thought, brought Christian teaching into contact with the Museum. This intercourse with non-Christian philosophical systems tended to develop the philosophical expression of Christian doctrine and to lay a basis for apologetics, so that we may say that the dogmatic formulation of Christian doctrine dates from the demands made upon the Church in Alexandria: it seems that Syria developed more quickly on the side of ritual and organization, the peculiar needs of Egypt rather urged forward the scientific expression and defence of what was previously held more or less by implication. The peculiar circumstances of Alexandria caused the simple instruction which, at a very early period, had been given to candidates for baptism to assume a wider character and to reproduce the external form of the lectures delivered by the philosophers of the Museum. Early in the third century, under Pantænus, these courses of instruction had already become public lectures attended by pagans as well as Christians. Under Pantænus' successors, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, this "Catechetical School of Alexandria," as it was called, became a Christian university.

The circumstances which caused Origen's final removal from Alexandria in A.D. 231—circumstances which concern the history of the Alexandrian Church, and so do not fall within our sphere—did not terminate his activity, and for more than twenty years he lived and worked at Cæsarea, where he founded another Catechetical School which, by the weight of his name, became almost as prominent as that of Alexandria. This model which Origen introduced into Palestine was copied at Antioch by Malchion (*circ.* A.D. 270), "who had been over the faculty of rhetoric in the Greek school at Antioch, and who, on account of his great and sincere faith in Christ, was also honoured with the office of

Origen removes to Cæsarea: founds a school there.

Malchion founds school at Antioch.

presbyter in that church" (Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, vii. 29). Neither Malchion nor the great Alexandrian teachers were bishops, but the stress of controversy had forced into prominence a new class of men, presbyters or laymen, who were intellectually qualified to undertake the work of controversy and instruction which the official heads of the Church were not always competent to discharge.

"Early School" of Antioch.

The work of Malchion is generally regarded as commencing the "Early School" of Antioch, a term which is intended to distinguish it from the "Middle School" started by Diodorus about a century later, and from the "Late School," all three being quite distinct in character and work. This early school, as might be expected from its imitation of Origen's work at Cæsarea, was especially connected with the textual criticism of the Scriptures.

Lucian.

Dorotheus.

The actual leader in this critical work was Lucian, who came from Edessa and was Malchion's pupil. For some reason not clearly known Lucian seems to have been under excommunication for several years (270–299), but at the end of that period he and another Biblical scholar, Dorotheus, commenced their critical labours. In this, there can be no doubt, they were consciously following Origen, although they employed rather different materials, and Dorotheus, who was a good Hebrew scholar, appears to have made a closer study of the Masoretic text of the Old Testament than Origen himself had done. The result was an Antiochene revised Greek text of both Testaments.

Syrian text. New Testament.

In the Lucianic revision of the New Testament "the qualities which the authors of the Syrian text seem to have most desired to impress upon it are lucidity and completeness. They were evidently anxious to remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way of the ordinary reader, so far as this could be done without recourse

to violent measures. They were apparently equally desirous that he should have the benefit of instructive matter contained in all the existing texts, provided it did not confuse the context or introduce seeming contradictions. New omissions accordingly are rare, and where they occur are usually found to contribute to apparent simplicity. New interpolations, on the other hand, are abundant, most of them being due to harmonistic or other assimilation" (Hort, *Introd. to the New Testament*, 134–135). This description is interesting as giving an account of the tendency of the school at Antioch.

Although it was known that for a long time the Lucianic revision of the Septuagint had circulated in the Syrian and other churches, definite information about this form of the text was not attained until Field, in preparing his edition of the Hexapla, noticed in a prefatory epistle attached to the Arabic Syro-Hexapla a remark that the letter ⲗ in the margin denoted Lucianic readings. Passages thus marked were found also in certain MSS. (Cursives, 19, 82, 93, 108, of IV Kings), and the conjecture that these represented Lucian's revision was endorsed by the fact that their text agreed with the quotations made by the Antiochene fathers Chrysostom and Theodoret. Similar conclusions were independently reached by Lagarde, who published one volume of the Greek Old Testament (Genesis—II Esdras) entirely drawn from MSS. which may be reasonably regarded as Lucianic.

Old Testament.

Lucian died in A.D. 311–312, and in the course of the fourth century his revised text seems to have spread generally over Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece.

Between the 3rd and 5th centuries it appears that the Gospels were read in the Syriac Liturgy in the form of a harmony or diatessaron compiled by Tatian (*circ.* A.D. 175). Whether this was the original form in which the Gospels were made known to the Syriac-

speaking congregations, or whether the diatessaron is compiled from earlier versions (perhaps those now known as the Curetonian and the Sinaitic) is a question still under debate ; but there is clear evidence that the diatessaron edited by Tatian at Edessa (as it appears) practically displaced the four Gospels until the time of Rabbula (see p. 97). Reference to the reading of the "Mixed Gospel," as this harmony was called, is made in the *Doctrine of Addai*. So great was its vogue that it was the basis of Ephraim's commentary and was translated in the 6th century into Latin, and in the 11th century into Arabic.

Peshitta.

It is difficult not to suppose that the Syriac version known as the Peshitta or "Simple" had some connection with this critical work at Antioch. Professor Driver has noted its similarity to the Lucianic Greek in the books of Samuel, and Mr. Burney seems to think that the same is the case with the two books of Kings, but "this translation appears to have been made from a Hebrew text similar in many respects to that pre-supposed by the LXX, though more nearly related to the M. T. than the LXX original" (Burney, *Notes on Heb. Text of Kings xxxii.*), although "the value of the version varies greatly, as it is not the work of a single hand" (Nestle, in Hastings' *Dict. Bib.*, iv. 651). The full discussion of this and the more involved problems connected with the other Syriac versions of the New Testament belongs, however, to the province of Biblical criticism: we have here only to notice the importance of critical studies in the early school of Antioch, its independent study of the Hebrew text, and the existence of at least one version of the Bible in Syriac, all matters of great importance in the subsequent religious life of Syria.

Already, it would appear, the Antiochene school had assumed its definite character. As the tone of Alexandria inclined to mysticism, so that of Antioch

had a rationalistic tendency. In Scripture exposition it preferred the literal and historical to the allegorical exegesis favoured by its Egyptian rival, and the same tendency appeared in its treatment of doctrine. To understand the manner in which this was manifested it will be necessary to survey very briefly the leading theological controversies contemporary with the "early school," that is to say, for the period 270–370.

Rationalistic tendency at Antioch.

So far as Syria is concerned these controversies began with Paul of Samosata, who was bishop of Antioch A.D. 260–272. His teaching was of a more definitely monarchian character than that of the Arians who followed a little later. To quote the circular letter prepared by the Council held at Antioch in 269, "he does not wish to confess with us that the Son of God descended from heaven . . . he says that Jesus was from below" (Euseb., *H.E.*, vii. 30). He seems to have held that the Divine Logos dwelt in Jesus, who remained a man only, although the temporary tabernacle of the Logos. It is difficult to dissociate this altogether from the revival which was taking place amongst the Ebionite sects about this same period, and which may well have exercised an indirect influence within the Syrian Church; indeed the adoption of so much of the "Clementine" literature proves that there was some such influence. Paul's doctrines were formally condemned, chiefly through the efforts of the same Malchion who was the founder of the school of Antioch; yet he had a considerable following. After Paul's condemnation he was deposed by the Council and Domnus was ordained bishop, but contrary to practice neither clergy nor people were consulted in his election, which was solely the work of the bishops assembled at the Council. Undoubtedly this was due to the fear that the clergy and people might re-elect Paul, and incidentally it shows the strength of his following. It

Paul of Samosata.

was, however, an irregular proceeding, and many who were not in accord with Paul's teaching refused to recognize Domnus. Queen Zenobia, who was then reigning at Palmyra under the suzerainty of Rome, had great influence throughout Syria, so great indeed that she had already awakened the jealousy of the Imperial court, and this influence she now used on behalf of Paul, and thus he was able to retain possession of the great church and episcopal palace attached to it. Three years later, however, the too independent Zenobia was defeated and made prisoner by the Emperor Aurelian (A.D. 272), and Malchion seized this opportunity to appeal to the Emperor, who, naturally, cared nothing for the doctrinal disputes of the Christian community, but disapproved of Paul as a friend of the rebellious Queen, and so he was ejected.

Soon after this followed the great persecution which is commonly connected with the name of Diocletian. During this Syria was the chief sufferer, for Maximinus, who resided at Antioch, was the ruler who appears to have been most hostile to Christianity. No doubt the political disorders and the severe misfortunes which attended Maximinus' rule alienated from him many who previously had little sympathy with the Christians, whilst persecution awakened much feeling for the persecuted. And so when, in 311, Constantine proclaimed the official recognition of the Christian religion, Antioch seems to have already become an almost exclusively Christian city.

The last persecution.

Toleration.

For a short period the Church enjoyed peace, and devoted it energies to church building and in the preparation of copies of the Scriptures to replace those destroyed during the persecution. In both these forms of energy Syria took a leading part. The form and arrangement of the churches erected in Syria became the model on

Arian controversy.

which Byzantine architecture was afterwards based, the model which has remained most popular in the East, and is indirectly the parent of the Romanesque or Norman architecture of the West. The Bibles produced by Syrian scribes presented the Syrian text of the school of Antioch, and this text became the form which displaced all others in the Eastern Churches, and is indeed the *textus receptus* from which our Authorized Version is translated: this of course applies only to the New Testament.

But the peace of the Church was soon disturbed by internal controversy produced by the teaching of Arius. Arianism arose in the Alexandrian Church, but every other Church was soon afterwards involved. At the time when the dispute commenced the bishop of Antioch was Philogonius (319–323), who proved a vehement opponent of Arius' teaching, but the next bishop, Paulinus of Tyre (323–324), was one of Arius' personal friends and his warm supporter. Paulinus was followed by Eustathius (324–331), who supported Athanasius and who occupied one of the principal, if not the principal, place in the Council at Nicæa. This prominence led to his downfall. A conspiracy of Arian bishops, led by Eusebius the Historian, accused Eustathius of holding the heresy of Sabellius; a council was held and Eustathius was declared deposed. In the heated partisanship of the period it is difficult for a modern student of history to distinguish the real merits of each charge of heresy. Eustathius, however, had a strong following and attempted to resist the decree of a council which he declared, perhaps with truth, was packed with personal antagonists; but the decree was enforced by Imperial authority and Eustathius was expelled the city in 331. The result was that Eustathius' followers refused to recognize the bishop appointed in his place or to hold any communion with the Church that did recognize him, and so there

Eustathian schism.

were two Churches, the official Eusebian Church with Arian tendencies, and the nonconformist Eustathian Church, a state of affairs which lasted ninety years.

It is noteworthy that several leading Arians were pupils of Lucian and of the school of Antioch. But this school was now falling into disrepute as intellectual life languished under the heat of theological controversy. At last it died out altogether: thus the "early school" terminated and an interval elapsed before the formation of the "middle school."

Decay of the school of Antioch.

Leontius, who became bishop of Antioch in 348, was one of those who, whilst conforming to orthodox formula, had sympathies with the Arians and wished their inclusion within the Church, a type of "broad-churchman" who aroused the unqualified dislike of both parties. Of him Athanasius says: "He participated in the errors of Arius, but carefully concealed his impiety. Observing that the clergy and laity were divided in opinion, and that when praise was offered to the Son, some inserted the conjunction 'and,' whilst others used the preposition 'through' with regard to the Son and 'in' with the Holy Ghost, he repeated the doxologies in a low voice so that those who were nearest to him were able to hear only the words 'for ever and ever.' If it were not that there were so many proofs of his impiety, one might say that he did this only for the sake of making peace amongst the people; but his many cruel plots against the defenders of the truth, and the favour and good-will he bestowed on those who had adopted wicked principles, clearly show that he concealed his foolish views from fear of arousing the anger of the people and of incurring the severe punishments denounced by Constantius against all who dared to affirm that the Son differs from the Father" (Athan. in Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.*, ii. 24).

Leontius.

The chief adversary of Leontius was a layman, Diodorus, a native of Antioch who had studied philosophy at Athens and, on his return to Antioch, had commenced teaching, and gathered a band of pupils which goes by the name of the "middle school" of Antioch. His resistance to the bishop—closely parallel to that offered by Malchion to Paul of Samosata, to the Emperor Julian when he visited Antioch and tried to revive the pagan worship which had long been extinct in that city, and to the Arian Emperor Valens—won for him the high esteem of the orthodox, which was still further increased by his close friendship for St. Basil, who had been his fellow-student at Athens.

Diodorus.

At the death of Leontius in 357 or 358 the Arian Eudoxius, bishop of Germanicia, obtained the see by falsely representing himself as nominated by the Emperor Constantius, and during his brief episcopate the orthodox party led by Diodorus was openly persecuted.

Eudoxius.

In 360 Eudoxius was removed to Constantinople, and next year Meletius, bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, was appointed to the see of Antioch. Meletius had been consecrated by Arian bishops, and the Arian party confidently expected that he would prove their supporter, but this was not the case. So powerful was the Arian faction at Antioch that they procured from Constantius the banishment of Meletius and the appointment in his place of Euzoius, the companion and personal friend of Arius. This produced a new schism in Antioch, the Church being split into three sections: first were the Arians in communion with the bishop Euzoius and in possession of the principal churches of the city; next was the party which adhered to the deprived bishop Meletius and refused to recognize

Meletius.

Meletian schism.

the validity of the appointment of Euzoius—these used the church of the Apostles in the older part of the city; thirdly was the more rigidly orthodox party which refused to recognize the Arian Euzoius or Meletius, who had received his consecration at Arian hands—these were led by a presbyter named Paulinus and met in a church which Euzoius relinquished to them. After a while Lucifer bishop of Calaris visited Antioch, ostensibly to make peace between the two parties, but in reality he consummated the schism by consecrating Paulinus bishop. After this each party had its own bishop.

School of Diodorus.

In this schism the Meletian party may be regarded as the moderate one. It was led by Diodorus, who had been the opponent of Leontius, and his friend Flavian. At this time Diodorus was a presbyter, though the date of his ordination is unknown. Thus the "middle school" of Antioch was closely identified with the Meletian party, and became prominent during the period that that party was oppressed by the ascendant Arian faction, for the presidency of Diodorus terminated in 378, the very year in which Gratian became Emperor and Meletius was restored to his bishopric. The school of Diodorus formed a semi-monastic community in Antioch, for monasticism was then spreading throughout the whole Church, and thus it differed essentially from the "early school" which had followed the model of the non-Christian philosophic schools. Moreover, the school of Diodorus was essentially theological, and does not appear to have taken any part in critical work such as had interested the earlier community.

Teaching of Diodorus.

We cannot form a direct estimate of the teaching given by Diodorus to the school over which he presided, as no works of his are known to be extant: we can only form an opinion from the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, who violently

attacked them, describing them as the source from which the teachings of Nestorius took their rise. It would appear that, in laying emphasis upon the humanity of Christ he drew a distinction between the Divine Word and the human body in which the Word dwelt, although in no degree making the separation implied in the teaching of Paul of Samosata. It is dubious, moreover, how far Diodorus' teaching actually went, and how far Cyril thought that he might ascribe to Diodorus opinions which later theologians had drawn from his expressions.

Contemporary with Diodorus the heathen sophist Libanius was teaching rhetoric and philosophy in Antioch, and had amongst his pupils three young men, Theodore, John, and Maximus, all natives of Antioch. Libanius himself is one of the interesting figures of the last age of paganism endeavouring to inspire an old religion with the ethical teachings of the philosophers, the friend and adviser of the Emperor Julian. After some time Libanius was deserted by his pupil John, who attached himself to the monastic school of Diodorus, and was soon afterwards followed by Theodore and Maximus.

Pupils of Diodorus.

In 378 Diodorus was ordained bishop of Tarsus and left the school of Antioch, where his work was continued by Theodore. At the same time Meletius obtained formal recognition as lawful bishop of Antioch and the Meletian party received possession of the churches of the city. With Theodore, therefore, begins the period of the prosperity of the "middle school," although it had received its peculiar impress from the teaching of Diodorus. Theodore was a preacher of exceptional eloquence who appealed to many besides the actual pupils of the school, and began a career of literary activity by the publication of a commentary on the Psalms in the very year of Diodorus' departure.

Theodore.

Theodore, commonly known as Theodore of Mopsuestia, the town where his later years were spent as bishop, became the great theologian of the Syrian Church.

In 381 Meletius presided over the Council of Constantinople, dying almost immediately afterwards. He was succeeded in the see of Antioch by Flavian, the friend and companion of Diodorus. It was by Flavian that Theodore was ordained in 383, and John two years later. John, who, it will be remembered, had been the first of the three who left Libanius, very soon surpassed Theodore in eloquence and became one of the most influential characters in the Church of Antioch. In 397 he was appointed bishop of Constantinople, where his eloquence earned for him the name of Chrysostom. His most important homiletical works, however, are those which belong to the period of his ministry at Antioch (381–397, he had been ordained deacon in 381, presbyter in 385.) Great as John Chrysostom afterwards became, justly reckoned as one of the four great fathers of the Eastern Church, his work did not obtain the lasting influence in Syria which marked that of Theodore and of Diodorus.

Episcopate of Flavian.

In the year that John was ordained presbyter (385) Theodore left Antioch and rejoined his master Diodorus at Tarsus; it has been suggested that this was partly due to the ascendency of John. Theodore remained at Tarsus until 392, when he was ordained bishop of Mopsuestia. A fuller consideration of the influence exercised by Theodore must be reserved until we consider the rise of the Nestorian party forty years later.

Theodore at Tarsus.

It will be remembered that the extreme party refused to recognize Meletius on the ground of his Arian ordination, and had received a bishop of their own by the ordination of

Party of Paulinus.

Paulinus. This party still held aloof when Meletius was restored in 378, and refused to admit the legitimacy of his successor Flavian. Paulinus himself died in 388, but before his death consecrated Evagrius as his successor. Evagrius had but a brief tenure of office and his followers had no other bishop, though they continued to celebrate their services apart until 414, when the schism was terminated. It was this extreme party which was alone recognized as the Church of Antioch by the Western Churches which, in theory, did not admit the legitimacy of the bishops who ordained Theodore and Chrysostom. Neither this party nor the Arians had any share in the literary and theological activity of the school of Antioch, which in the second phase of its existence was entirely identified with the Meletian section.

Our attention has now been given to the theological and literary life of Greek Syria. Strictly this can hardly be described as Syrian history, it is rather the history of the Eastern Church, but its course had so great an influence upon the subsequent life and thought of Syria that we could not afford to neglect it.

IV

SYRIAN MONASTICISM

WE must now turn to the subject of monasticism, a matter which has been of enormous importance in the history of the Christian Church, and especially so in that of its Egyptian and Syrian branches. In the first place, it must be freely admitted that monasticism was not peculiar to Christianity, and came in the first place from a non-Christian source. As far as Christianlty is concerned, its home was in Egypt.

Importance of monasticism.

Prof. Flinders Petrie (*Religion and Conscience in Early Egypt*, 1898, pp. 122–3) points out that early Egypt does not show any tendency to asceticism, but that such a tendency had arisen under the Ptolemies, perhaps from intercourse with the Far East, but this is matter for speculation. Such a tendency showed itself in the recluses who attached themselves to the temples of Serapis, especially that at Memphis (Weingarten, *Ursprung*, 30–36; *Monchtum*, 784, etc.). (See introduction to Dr. Cuthbert Butler's *Lausiac History*.)

Egyptian precedent.

Judaism, as known to us in the Old Testament, had no ascetic tendency, save in the rare instance of the Nazarite vow, but Egyptian Judaism, the source of the Hellenistic atmosphere in which the Christian Church was cradled, being contemporary with the rise of the ascetic life in the

Hellenistic Judaism.

temples of Serapis, was deeply influenced by this ideal. Thus we must trace monasticism back to Hellenistic Judaism in its Egyptian home, thence back to the κάτοχοι, as they were called, in the temples of Serapis, and thence perhaps to the influence of Buddhism passing along the great southern route through Gaza and connecting India with Egypt. We know that a Buddhist mission visited Ptolemy Philadelphus (Mahaffy, *Empire of the Ptolemies*, 163).

The connection with Buddhism, however, is not much more than a theory which rests mostly on similarity of aim, namely, spiritual development by means of contemplation: the connection with the κάτοχοι of the temples of Serapis has the strongest probability, as Hellenistic Judaism was their contemporary in Egypt. The contemplative life appears fully developed in the writings of Philo, a typical Jewish Hellenist who exercised a profound influence on first century Judaism and, indirectly, upon Christian thought. In the treatise *De Legum allegoria* (ii. 21) he relates that he was accustomed from time to time to go away from the town and pass an interval in meditation in some solitary place, making a kind of religious retreat, under the idea that spiritual matters can be best understood when worldly interests are laid aside. In another treatise, *De Præmiis et Pœnis* (3), and again in *De Specialibus Legibus*, he refers to this same habit of occasional retirement. In the treatise *De Abrahamo* (4) he describes the typical good man as going out from time to time to the wilderness, or to some solitary place, for spiritual meditation. The contemporary community of the Essenes in Palestine was following out this very same idea of a life of retirement, and of these Philo speaks with approbation in *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (12). We do not dwell so much on the evidence of the description of the Therapeutæ in the

Evidence of Philo.

De Vita Contemplativa, as the authenticity of that work has been questioned, though well vindicated by Conybeare and, in so far as it deals with the Therapeutæ, is well supported by passages from other works of Philo. It is sufficiently clear from these citations of Philo and from the known existence of the Essenes at the same period, that the contemplative life was held in high esteem amongst the Hellenistic Jews. Neo-Platonism, a later phase of Alexandrian thought, also honoured the contemplative life: by seclusion and meditation, it was held, alone was it possible to attain to spiritual perception, and evidently neo-Platonism had in this the same source as Hellenistic mysticism and Christian monasticism.

New Testament instances.

It must not be forgotten that St. Paul tells us that he himself had recourse to a period of retirement at a great spiritual crisis of his life, "when it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me . . . immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus" (Gal. i. 15–17). We might also cite the example of Christ's retirement into the wilderness. On these grounds it seems probable (1) that the origin of the hermit and monastic character lay in admiration for the contemplative life as a means of attaining a higher spiritual perception, and (2) that this contemplative life was held in esteem in Hellenistic thought and, through the medium of Hellenistic influence, passed into Christian spheres. The ascetic idea was the endeavour to reach a higher spiritual perception by the mortification of the body, it being supposed that the body hampered the soul in its apprehension of things immaterial. This aim at "abstracting" the soul from the influences of the body, of mortifying the members and bringing them into subjection, was common to Buddhists, the κάτοχοι

The contemplative ideal.

of Serapis, the Jewish Hellenists, and the Christian ascetics. In had also appeared in the ideals of the Pythagoreans and Stoics, in both cases probably derived from oriental sources.

As early as the third century, when these ideas had taken a strong hold upon the non-Christian mystics of Alexandria, they appeared in Egyptian Christian circles as well, and Christians began to retire into the solitudes to live as hermits.

The first famous Egyptian ascetic was Paul of Thebes, who withdrew into the desert about A.D. 250, at the time of the Decian persecution, and eighteen years later he was followed by Antony. Antony, who for some time lived in a tomb, no doubt one of those cells where the ancient Egyptian priests who offered for the dead had dwelt at an earlier epoch. Indeed it may well have been that the presence of these secluded tomb-dwellings had much to do with encouraging the hermit life which became so popular in the Egyptian Church.

Paul of Thebes.

Antony.

After some time Antony gathered some disciples around him, but monastic life proper began in the fourth century with Ammon in the Nitrian desert, Macarius at Sketis, and Pachomius in the Thebaid. These communities, like those of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, formed kinds of villages whose inhabitants spent part of their time in work and contemplation in their huts, and from time to time joined together for worship in a common oratory. Towards the end of the fourth century it is said that there were fourteen hundred monks in the Thebaid, and five thousand in the Nitrian desert.

Ammon, Macarius, Pachomius.

Egypt remained the home and centre of the monastic life, and from all parts those who intended to follow a career of asceticism went up to Nitria, Sketis, or the Thebaid, to learn the customs of the communities there. Thus in southern Gaul we find monasticism introduced at

Egypt, the home of monasticism.

Lerins by John Cassian, who had received his training in Egypt, and from Gaul a regular succession of bishops and clergy went over to visit the Nitrian desert. Under the influence of monasticism Egypt, far more than Rome or Constantinople, was the centre of the religious life of Christendom. From Gaul the monastic life spread up through the Keltic Church to Ireland or Scotland, and the great ascetic communities of the north-west, such as those at Bangor (in Ireland), Iona, and Holy Island, all claimed to be followers of the Egyptian model. It is interesting to note that the word "desert," one of the commonest Irish place-names, always denotes the site of an early monastery: there were no deserts in Ireland, but the settlements which tried to copy the life of Nitria and Sketis clung to the Egyptian tradition which associated the monastic life with the desert.

Benedict.

In the fifth century St. Benedict inaugurated a new and far more practical type of monastic life, which gradually spread through the West and crushed out the more indolent and contemplative life of Eastern monasticism. The Greek, Coptic, and Syriac Churches, however, continue to this day a type of monastic life little, if at all, changed from that of the Nitrian desert. Until the time of Benedict every monastic rule was based ultimately upon an Egyptian model.

Syrian monasticism.

Syria was one of the first parts to which monasticism spread from Egypt, and the type of monastic life in vogue in Syria was in all respects that of Egypt, save that the rocky heights in the north of Mesopotamia replaced the deserts of Nitria and the Thebaid, and that Syria tended to preserve more completely the hermit life, a tendency which produced the famous pillar-saints of Syria, such sa Simeon Stylites; and that in Syria there was a great increase of the fasts and liturgical offices observed by

the monks. The intercourse between the Syrian and Egyptian monks was very close; almost every important Syrian monk, certainly every one who aimed at being a reformer or an exact follower of the ascetic ideal, visited the communities in Egypt. There must have been constant intercourse and news-bearing between the two countries. Over and over again, in theological disputes in Syria, the views upheld by the Syrian monks were not those of their bishops, but those current in the monasteries of Egypt. Our own British Museum contains a collection of Syriac MSS. obtained from the Nitrian monasteries in lower Egypt. Many, perhaps most, of the Coptic monastic rules and lives of the monastic saints are to be found also in a Syriac dress.

Hilarion.

Hilarion, a friend and companion of Antony, is said to have first extended monasticism from Egypt to Palestine. After living with Antony until he was disgusted at the large number of visitors who were attracted by the great hermit's fame, he returned to his native city of Gaza and became a hermit in a lonely spot about seven miles from the neighbouring town of Majoma. Here he cultivated a small plot of ground and made palm-leaf baskets, devoting the rest of his time to contemplation. His garments were a shirt of sackcloth and a coat of skins, which had been the gift of Antony. After some time Hilarion became as famous in Palestine as Antony had been in Egypt, and his cell was thronged with visitors who came to ask questions, to be healed of some infirmity, or even—as was the case with a public official of Majoma—to obtain success for horses in the chariot races. At length the crowds became so numerous that Hilarion left his cell and visited, first Babylon, then Egypt, where he slept one night in the cell formerly occupied by Antony, and then Sicily and Cyprus. This is interesting and

characteristic, for the Palestinian and Syrian monks distinctly had a taste for wandering, a thing which does not appear in the case of Egyptian monks.

There was a friend of Hilarion also who was associated with the spread of monasticism in Palestine, namely, Epiphanius, a native of Besanduke. In his youth he visited Egypt, and was deeply impressed by the communities in Nitria and the Thebaid. At the age of twenty he returned home, and near his native town gathered a little community on the Egyptian model. Like Hilarion and Antony he was acclaimed a saint in his life-time, and visited by the inquisitive and devout. In 367 he was appointed bishop of Salamis (Constantia) in Cyprus, and spent a large part of his episcopate in founding monastic communities all over the island. Epiphanius was one of the stoutest adherents of the Nicene decrees, and an uncompromising assailant of heresy. His *Refutation of all the Heresies* is still extant, and, although its value is greatly diminished by the writer's uncritical attitude and by the evident use of mere hearsay as history, it contains much important information not to be found elsewhere.

Epiphanius.

Soon after monasticism had been introduced into Palestine, early in the fourth century, Aones reproduced the same ideas in Syria. Hence it spread westwards into Syriac Mesopotamia, where its centre was in the wild rocky hills to the north of Mosul, where many monasteries still survive, though often plundered by Turks and Kurds.

Aones.

The founder of Mesopotamian monasticism was Awgin. By trade he had been a diver for pearls, but impressed by the reports which circulated about the monks in Egypt, he visited the disciples of Pachomius in the Thebaid, and was himself admitted into their community, where he served as baker. At length he withdrew because the report of his piety attracted so great attention that the

Awgin.

brethren wished to make him their abbot. His written life relates that his piety culminated in his entering the oven and remaining there some time in the midst of the fire in prayer. The unfortunate part about many of these lives is that the personality of the more famous monks is obscured by the incredible miracles related. Many of such lives were in substance sermons delivered on the saint's anniversary, as is made evident by the rhetorical form in which they are cast, and the orators seem to have freely drawn in, for purposes of edification, any anecdote based on popular tradition, and such anecdotes were often no more than pious gossip. But it must not be overlooked that behind the embroidery of legend there are real incidents often revealing lives of a very real piety and humility. Our tendency is to reject rather impatiently a narrative which is swelled with descriptions of incredible and often puerile miracles, but the leading facts and the sayings of the saint, in all probability authentic, are generally worth attention as revealing the real character and work of those who in their day exercised a great influence upon the Christian community.

After leaving the Thebaid Awgin retired to Syria, and finally settled on Mount Izla, near the city of Nisibis, where Jacob, the founder of the school of Nisibis, was then bishop. This was in A.D. 325. Following Awgin's example, all subsequent monastic establishments in Mesopotamia settled in the rocky hills, just as the Egyptian ones went into the desert. On Izla Awgin gathered three hundred and fifty followers, and this community became the parent and metropolis of a monastic life which spread over Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Persia. Jacob of Nisibis greatly encouraged this outburst of monasticism, himself building a church for the use of the dwellers on Mount Izla. Mount Izla.

In the fifth century monasticism spread from Izla

into Persia and Armenia. In Persia the monastic life, with its fasts and vow of celibacy, was very repugnant to the native Persians, for the religion of Zoroaster is averse from any form of asceticism; monks were therefore very unpopular in Persia, and when at a later date the Persians invaded Syria they always treated monastic communities with great cruelty. At the time of the Nestorian schism, when the followers of Nestorius were persecuted in the Empire, they found refuge and support in Persia, mainly because they were hostile to the Imperial government, and during that period of friendly relations with the Persians they conformed to some extent to Persian prejudices, and so the Nestorian synod held at Seleucia in 485 passed a decree permitting monks and nuns to marry.

Monasticism in Persia and Armenia.

These married monks seem to have existed in large numbers in the Nestorian monasteries during the latter years of the fifth and during the sixth centuries, but they were of course entirely contrary to the original genius of monasticism. In the last part of the sixth century the expulsion of the married monks who lived in the "outer cells" with their wives and families was one of the chief works of such reformers as Babhai, who endeavoured to restore the severity of the early ideal of Mount Izla in the Persian monasteries. It does not seem, however, that the great horror of marriage and even of ordinary converse with women which characterized the earlier Egyptian monasticism ever prevailed in Syria.

Babhai's reforms.

We have referred to the Nestorian schism, the fuller consideration of which must be reserved for a subsequent lecture; later again was the Monophysite schism. Thus the Syrian Church was divided into the three main branches which still survive: those who are in communion with the Greek Church, the Nestorians, who are

Divisions in Syria.

peculiar to Syria, Persia, and Central Asia, and the Jacobites or Monophysites, who are also found in the Coptic Church of Egypt. All these three sections have monasteries, and the general ideal of the ascetic life and monastic discipline is the same for all, since monasticism had fully taken form before the schisms which produced these divisions.

It will now be interesting to consider briefly the life of the Syrian monasteries. In the first place, the Syrian monastery did not resemble the abbey of Western Europe. In the West the name "monk" was retained, but the solitary life of the cell was very rare; in abbeys there were cells for writing and study, but the life of the monks was passed in community, with hardly any privacy at all. A few recluses existed in mediæval Europe, but the hermit life was in disfavour in the West; the Carthusians and the Austin Eremites lived in secluded cells, and those were quite minor ones, but every other order made its members live in common. In the Syrian monastery were two types of life: close to the church was the cœnobitum, where some monks lived together and where the younger ones were trained; amongst the rocks in the neighbourhood were cells where other monks lived absolutely solitary lives save on Saturdays, Sundays, and festivals, when they joined the members of the cœnobitum in the church. In fact, therefore, the Syrian monastery was a village, like the Egyptian laura, grouped round a public church. In Egypt the laura contained huts or old tombs, each sheltering, in Nitria and Sketis, two monks, in the Thebaid three; the church in the centre was no more than a large hut. When monasticism spread from Egypt through Gaul to Ireland and Scotland the same plan was copied, and an interesting example remains in the island of Inismurray in the Atlantic off the coast of Sligo. As the island lacks wood, the huts and oratory were

Life in the Syrian monasteries.

built of stones, and still remain, a collection of beehive huts grouped round a small oratory, the whole surrounded with a cashel or rampart of earth and stones. In Syria also there was difficulty in procuring wood, so the Syrian monastic churches were of stone, many very stately structures, and the cells were usually caves.

Monastery of Rabban Hormizd.

Budge, in the introduction to his edition of Thomas of Marga's *Book of Governors*, describes the monastery of Rabban Hormizd, which he visited in 1890, and which is fairly typical of one of the greater establishments. It is built about halfway up a range of mountains and is approached by a narrow rocky path. Here stands the church: "its building is of a dusky red colour and is supported upon an enormous rock into which solid masonry has been built." In the rocks around are the caves where the ancient solitaries lived. None of these had doors, although the weather in the hills is often very inclement; "the chill which they strike into the visitor gives an idea of what those who lived in them must have suffered from the frosts of winter and the drifting rain. Some of them have niches hewn in their sides or backs in which the monks probably slept, but many lack even this shred of comfort. . . . The cells are separate one from the other, and are approached by narrow terraces, but some of them are perched in almost inaccessible places, and, unless other means of entrance existed in former days, could only have been approached by the monks crawling down from the crest of the mountain and swinging themselves into them. I saw no marks of fire in any of the cells" (Budge, *op. cit.*, I. clxviii.). The monastery adjoining the church is still inhabited, though the cells on the hillside are now deserted. When Dr. Budge spent a night there in 1890, he found only ten or eleven inmates, though there had been thirty-nine in 1843, and fifty in 1820, when the monastery had been visited by European travellers. At the foot of

the hill is another monastery of later date. The abbot of this latter is described by Dr. Budge as "a very intelligent and superior man" who "could read Latin and talk Italian"; "in his library I saw a manuscript copy of the *Homilies of Aphraates*, which had been taken from the printed text edited by the late Professor Wright of Cambridge" (*id.* I. clxix., note 5). Indeed, there are traces of learning and energy in the Syrian monasticism of to-day which contrasts strongly with the effete condition of Egyptian monasticism.

The rule of the Syrian monasteries was that a person who desired to enter was first required to spend some time as a novice, and his final admission depended upon his conduct during this period (Budge, *op. cit.*, *Rule of Mar Abraham*, p. 134, canon 10). In the monasteries of Mount Izla this was required for a period of three years; "then, if they have borne themselves in a befitting manner, the brethren shall give them permission to build cells for themselves . . . if there be empty cells, let them be given to them" (*id.*). The day was spent in manual labour, except on Sundays, festivals, and the eves of these days, lest they should be too fatigued to take a proper part in the services. The Egyptian monasteries had daily morning and evening prayer recited privately in each cell, except on Saturdays, Sundays, and festivals, when all joined together in the church. The Syrian monasteries increased the number of daily services until they were altogether seven, citing for this the words of Psalm cxiii. (cxix.) 164, "seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." The services were called, (1) morning, (2) at the third hour, (3) at the sixth hour, (4) at the ninth hour, (5) in the evening, (6) protection or compline, the former name from the words of Psalm xc. (xci.) 2, which was recited at this office, and (7) the

Admission to the monastery.

Daily prayers.

night office. Later these seven "hours of prayer" passed over to Egypt and thence into the Western Church, but it was in origin a Syrian use. Sometimes an eighth office was added, in Egypt a private form of "the curtain," in the West there was a double morning office, Laudes and Prime. The original custom was to recite the whole Psalter daily in seven sections distributed between these services, but gradually this was modified; in Egypt some psalms were always omitted, although others were repeated more than once. In the West only a few psalms were recited every day, the rest being divided so that they were said at least once a week. In the Greek and Syrian Churches some were said every day, the rest twice a week in Lent, once a week at other times. This regular recitation of the Psalter was originally peculiar to the monasteries, but in the West, and to some extent in Syria and Egypt, it spread out to the parish churches.

A distinctive mark of Eastern monasticism was the practice of excessive penances, not merely in severe fasting and hard labour, but in such mortifications as burning the flesh, wearing chains, enduring the stings of the insects which abound in the warm climate of the East, and similar things. Of this the most striking instance is afforded by Simeon Stylites. At the age of sixteen he entered a monastery and distinguished himself by the rigour of his penances. About 413 he established himself in a cell near Antioch, where he soon became as famous as Antony and Hilarion had been. To save himself from the curiosity of visitors he built a new cell on a raised platform, and, as this did not prove effectual, he raised the height of the stage until it was forty cubits above the ground. He was the first of a series of pillar saints whose aim, it must be remembered, was to seek seclusion in raising themselves thus out of the reach of visitors.

Penances.

Simeon Stylites.

Although the early monks practised complete seclusion from the world, this was not always the case with their followers. It will be remembered that the community established by Diodorus at Antioch was both a monastery and the nucleus of the middle school of Antioch. Elsewhere also monasteries began to be associated with learning, and the library began to be a regular adjunct of the cœnobitum. In the theological disputes of the fifth and sixth centuries the monks took a great interest, thronging to Alexandria or Antioch in vast numbers and often causing serious embarrassment to the civil government, until the Emperor Leo made a law that monks might not quit their monasteries to visit the cities in large numbers.

Monastic schools and libraries.

So great was the influence of monasticism in the Church of the fifth and following centuries that it is impossible for us to neglect the subject, and no adequate treatment of monasticism is possible without some knowledge of the Egyptian monks who were the pioneers and teachers of the movement. The outline of our lecture will give a general idea of the rise of monasticism, but those who desire to study its details more fully should refer to the works of Schiwietz (*Das morgenlandische monchtum*, 1904), Ladeuze (*Cenobitisme Pakomien*), Leipoldt's *Schenute von Atripe*, with the review by Mr. Crum in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (V. 129), and Dr. Butler's *Lausiac History;* and, for Syrian monasticism, to Dr. Budge's edition of Thomas of Marga's *Book of Governors.* Whilst Egypt is the source from which all monasticism must be traced, its close connection with Syria makes it peculiarly important for the history of Syrian monasticism. It has already been mentioned that there was constant passing to and fro between the Syrian

Recent authorities on Eastern monasticism.

Intercourse between Syria and Egypt.

and Egyptian monks, and Egypt has proved a store-house of Syriac MSS. of a monastic and patristic character. We may here mention a matter which is still an unsolved problem. In 1896, Prof. Margoliouth published a Syriac liturgy used in the Nile valley, so that evidently there was a Syriac-speaking community in Egypt, but its presence there is unexplained and no details are known. The study of comparative liturgy, a study which can throw great light on the problems of early Church history, also proves close connection between the Churches of Alexandria and Antioch.

V

THE REVIVAL OF PERSIA

WE must now turn back for a moment to the history of Persia. The Parthian Empire, which had been established at the revolt from the Seleucidæ in B.C. 250, came to an end in A.D. 226. Greek influence and Greek culture, however, continued in the ascendant in the Parthian dominions, and the Syriac Church spread Christianity east of the Tigris and produced many flourishing Churches in Persia. In the course of the third century there was a nationalist revival amongst the Persians, a feeling of antagonism towards Hellenic influences, and renewed life on the part of the Zoroastrian religion. A national leader appeared in Ardishir, or Artaxerxes, as he was called by the Greeks, an officer of obscure though not ignoble birth, who claimed descent from the family of the great king Cyrus. He had distinguished himself in military service and attained great popularity amongst the soldiers, a fact which caused him to be treated with suspicion and disfavour by the Parthian king Artabanus. This private grievance led Ardishir to revolt, and, proclaiming himself the champion of the Zoroastrian religion, he quickly obtained a large following, defeated Artabanus in 226, and established himself on the throne. At the defeat of Artabanus the Parthian Empire disappears, and the old name of Persia is restored.

Fall of the Parthian Empire.

Ardishir.

The Sassanidæ, as the dynasty of Ardishir was called, ruled over Persia until the Mohammedan conquest in 651.

As soon as he was established as king, Ardishir sent to the Roman Emperor, Alexander Severus, demanding the instant surrender of those provinces, including Syria, which had ever belonged to Persia. Immediate war was the inevitable result. The Romans gained a victory over the Persians in 233, but were unable to follow up their advantage because of a general movement amongst the Teuton tribes in the West which necessitated the instant recall of many men from the Persian frontier. The boundary laid down under the later Parthian kings was, therefore, maintained.

War with Severus.

Shapur I, the son of Ardishir, who reigned 240–273, renewed the war with Rome, first against Gordian, then against Valerian. The latter emperor was treacherously seized at a conference in 260, and spent the residue of his life in a Persian prison subject to the most barbarous ill-usage. After taking Valerian, Shapur conquered Syria and destroyed Antioch, but was finally driven back by Odenathus, king of Palmyra. After the death of Odenathus the war was continued by his widow, Zenobia, who was so elated by her success against the Persian king whom the Romans had failed to repel, that she formed the project of an independent Syrian Empire under the leadership of Palmyra. But Rome had only suffered a temporary check, and finally, under Aurelian, Zenobia was attacked and beaten and taken prisoner as a rebellious vassal.

Shapur I.

The third Sassanid king, Hormuz, reigned only one year: his successor, Bahram I (274–277), continued the war with Zenobia and, after her deposition, with Aurelian. But this war terminated without definite result at the sudden

Bahram I.

death of Aurelian in 275. The history of these Persian kings has two strong claims upon our interest: in the first place, the rival ambitions of Rome and Persia were fought out in Syria during a period of nearly four centuries, and form the political background of the history of the people; and, secondly, the Persian princes were the defenders of the Zoroastrian faith, the most serious rival to the Christian Church before the rise of Mohammed. The revival of the Zoroastrian religion was a movement of very considerable importance, and, having attained ascendency in Persia under the Sassanid kings, it became a religion of marked intolerance, persecuting alike heathen and Christians. Its first serious effort at persecution was against Mani and his followers under Bahram I. Mani himself, at first in favour at the Persian court, developing a type of thought which to some extent resembled Gnosticism, but introducing as a prominent factor the Persian theory of dualism—of two rival deities, the good and the bad—was crucified somewhere about the year 275. His followers, the Manichæan sect, spread westwards through the Christian Church and survived into the thirteenth century, if we are right in supposing the Albigeois to be their offshoot, and eastwards into Armenia, Cappadocia, Turkestan and China; but the detailed study of the Manichæan heresy, as it was called by Christian writers, though really it was a system external to Christianity, and more especially its eastern history, has received very inadequate attention.

Under the next Persian king, Bahram II (277–294), Persia suffered severe reverses from the Roman Emperor Carus, the capital city, Ctesiphon, even falling into the hands of the Romans. His son, Bahram III, reigned only eight months, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Narsi I, who renewed the war with Rome with

Bahram II.

Bahram III.

disastrous results. He was succeeded by his son, Hormuz II (303–310), and he by Shapur II (310–381).

It was in this latter reign that the Christians in Persia had to face serious persecution. During the early years of Shapur II the Christian religion received formal recognition from Constantine, and there is no doubt that this identification of the Church with the Empire, for this must have been the appearance of Constantine's protection to the surrounding nations, was the chief cause of its disfavour in Persia. Moreover, there is evidence that Christianity had spread widely in the Persian dominions, and every Christian was suspected of disaffection towards the Persian king and secret attachment to the Roman Empire, the more so because even the Persian-speaking Christians employed the Syriac language in their religious worship. Probably this feeling of suspicion was increased by the letter which Constantine wrote to Shapur (Theod., *H. E.*, I. 25) asking protection and favour for the Christians resident in Persia. To this period belongs Aphraates, a converted Persian noble, the author of *Homilies* (vols. I. and II. of Graffin's *Patr. Syr.*, Paris, 1894, 1907).

Persecution of the Christians in Persia.

Aphraates.

Constantine's letter is evidence that the position of Christians in Persia was already the subject of anxiety. During the lifetime of Constantine, however, no open persecution took place, but later, when Constantine was dead and the Magi had attained complete ascendency over the Persian king, a violent persecution marked by many martyrdoms took place; indeed this Persian persecution was far more severe than any of those which had taken place under the Roman emperors.

This attack upon the Christians was but part of Shapur's anti-Western policy. In 350 he openly declared war against Rome, and marched westwards to seize Syria, the constant

Siege of Nisibis by the Persians.

aim of the Persian kings. The first important action was the siege of Nisibis, where the famous Jacob, the founder of the school of Nisibis, was then bishop. The siege lasted seventy days, and then, the Persians having built a dam across the River Mygdonius, the waters broke down the wall. Shapur, however, waited until next day to enter the city, and by that time found the wall rebuilt. Ephraim, Jacob's pupil, was at the time in the city, and has left us an account of the siege in the earlier of the *Carmina Nisibena*, one of the most interesting Syriac works extant, adorned after the fashion of the times with several miraculous incidents. The most striking of these is also related by Theodoret (II. 30), and relates how Ephraim asked the bishop to curse the Persians: this he refused to do, but prayed God to send flies and gnats, and this was done, so that the air was dark with them, and the maddened elephants rushed amongst the Persians and threw them into disorder. "Thus," concludes Theodoret, "the wretched king, learning by means of this slight and gentle punishment the power of that God who cares for the devout, departed with confusion at having experienced defeat where he had been confident of victory" (Theod., *H. E.*, II. 30).

This Persian war was concluded with a truce, contemporary with the Meletian schism described in a former chapter (p. 51).

In 361 Julian became emperor, and began a policy of toleration, allowing every bishop who had been exiled to return home (*Socr.*, III. 1), but not to displace any bishop who had been elected to his see (Julian, *Ep.* 26). Very soon, however, the emperor began the endeavour to restore the old pagan religion, and earned much unpopularity by requiring the restoration of temple lands which had been seized by private persons since the official recognition of Christianity, in very much the same

Julian Emperor.

way that Queen Mary of England afterwards became unpopular in trying to restore the monasteries by the surrender of their lands which had passed into lay hands.

The war with Persia was still in full course, and Julian determined to make a serious invasion of the dominions of Shapur. So in July 362 he established himself at Antioch in order to make preparations. Here he very soon made himself heartily disliked. His endeavour to restore paganism might have had a following in Rome or at Athens, but Antioch was of all places the most unlikely to prove sympathetic. If anything, the frank gaiety of the old religion might have appealed to some, especially since, after the rise of monasticism, Christianity was assuming a severer and more repressive character; but Julian endeavoured to revive paganism on the rigidly ascetic lines of the Stoic philosophy, and required its followers to surpass even the rigours of Christian monasticism. The one respect in which he left his philosophic ideals and acquiesced in the popular superstitions was in the use of omens and auspices, especially in the endeavour to discover signs of the future in the entrails of the dead, the very one thing of which cultured pagans were heartily ashamed. Christian as was the city of Antioch, with its monastic school founded by Diodorus, the populace was ardently attached to the pleasures of the circus and the theatre, amusements from which Julian steadily held aloof. Consequently the stricter Christians, who hated him for his paganism, the pagans who disliked his asceticism and were ashamed of his revival of the pagan practices they wanted forgotten, and the people at large who resented his abstinence from their amusements, all agreed in their unfavourable opinion of Julian. Nowhere were the gamins more audacious and

Julian at Antioch.

Unpopularity of Julian.

more witty than in Antioch, and the uncouth figure and bearded countenance of the emperor formed the subject of much ridicule, at which Julian was unwise enough to show his annoyance. Moreover, in preparation for the expedition against Persia, the emperor had brought his army with him, a host of semi-barbarous Gauls, who aroused the mingled disgust and dread of the Syrians (*Amm. Marc.*, xxii. 12).

Outside Antioch was the beautiful suburb of Daphne, where was one of the most famous temples in Syria. On the festival of the Sun God Julian visited Daphne in state, but to his surprise and anger found there none of the crowds of devotees he had expected, but only one old priest with a goose which he had purchased for sacrifice (*Misopogon*, 361 D). To his further displeasure, Julian found that the temple area had been made the burial place of the Christian martyr Babylas, and that the only crowds that now visited Daphne came to the martyr's shrine. He ordered the remains to be removed, but, not to offend the Christians too much, allowed them to convey the bones for re-burial elsewhere. Forthwith they were carried to Antioch in a triumphal procession, which quickly assumed the character of a popular demonstration against the emperor. Soon afterwards the temple of Daphne was set on fire by a mysterious incendiary.

Julian at Daphne.

As the year wore on the harvest proved to be exceptionally bad, and Antioch suffered from severe dearth. At this Julian, with the best intentions, imported a large quantity of Egyptian grain, which he sold at a low price. The only result of this experiment in political economy was that all the imported corn was bought up by a ring of speculators, who retailed it at famine prices.

The famine.

Meanwhile Julian was making himself more and

more unpopular. To extend his views he wrote books against Christianity, and these formed the subject of refutations from Christian preachers and writers, the world regarding with amazement this spectacle of emperor turned theologian. Even more ridiculous was his treatise *Misopogon*, an elaborate answer to the gamins and wits who had mocked his personal appearance and manners. Indeed, during the winter of 362–363 Antioch enjoyed the dangerous but exciting pastime of emperor-baiting.

The *Misopogon*.

In one of the streets of Antioch was a recently-established convent of women, under a lady named Publia. These nuns made it a practice of singing loudly those psalms which describe the vanity of idols whenever it was known that the emperor was passing, and, as Theodoret relates (*H. E.*, III. 19), "after having described the folly of idols, they said, 'let those who make them, and all those who trust in them, become like unto them.'" This annoyed Julian, who sent orders that the nuns were not to sing when he passed that way. Their only answer was to sing louder and to interpolate the refrain, "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered." Julian, more angry than ever, had Publia brought before him, and commanded a soldier to strike her on each cheek. The result was that she received the honour due to a confessor, and, in Theodoret's expressive words, "continued to harass the emperor with spiritual songs." In fine, Julian made himself supremely ridiculous, and had the mortification of seeing his departure welcomed with general rejoicings. Probably no other city would have proved so unfortunate for him.

Publia annoys Julian.

On March 5, 363, he left Antioch with the army to invade Persia. A few miles outside the city the road was in such bad repair that it was evident to all that no preparations for the route

Julian leaves Antioch.

had been made. The way led through Litarbe, Bercœa, Batnæ, and Marge, to Carrhæ, which was reached on March 19. Here Julian visited the temple, and found to his delight that Carrhæ was still thoroughly pagan. It is stated that in this temple he opened a woman's body to obtain omens of his expedition (Theodoret, *H. E.*, III. 26), and Chwolson has proved that rites of divination of this character were performed in this temple.

The march to Persia.

Carrhæ.

From Carrhæ two roads led to Persia, one through Nisibis to the Tigris, the other turning south along the Euphrates and then crossing the lower Tigris. Of these Julian chose the latter, and passing through Callinicum, Carchemish, and Zaitham, reached the Persian capital Ctesiphon. Here he was met with proposals of peace from Shapur, but refused them. After crossing the Tigris he burned his ships, no doubt in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy, but the act produced something like a panic amongst his followers. Supplies now ran short, and the army entered the desert, where it seems to have lost its way. There had been no definite battle as yet, but almost daily skirmishes with the light-armed Persian cavalry. At last, in one of these, Julian was slain by a javelin, whether thrown by one of the enemy or by one of his own followers has never been known.

Ctesiphon.

Julian slain.

The soldiers at once elected Jovian, who was serving as general, to be emperor, and he began his reign by making a thirty years' truce with Persia, the Persians to supply guides and food for the retreat. In return the Romans were pledged to surrender Nisibis and to cease all protection over the border kingdoms of Armenia and Iberia. The news of these terms caused the utmost

Jovian Emperor.

dismay in the city of Nisibis: the inmates had too good reason to fear that the Persian king would now revenge himself for his former repulse from their walls. Jovian perhaps dreaded this possibility, or more probably feared that the city would not readily admit the Persian army, and ordered all the citizens to vacate their town and withdraw to Amida or other neighbouring city. This seemed to the citizens a terrible necessity: they begged to be allowed to remain, protesting their willingness and ability to defend themselves without making any claims upon the Roman arms. This Jovian would not permit, even threatening death to those who attempted to remain in the city after its surrender. Ammianus, himself an eye-witness of the scene, describes the wailing in the city when it was found that nothing could prevail upon the emperor to allow the citizens to remain, and they bid a last farewell to their homes and to the Manes of their families (*Amm. Marc.*, xxv. 8). At last the empty city was handed over to the Persians, and Jovian hastened to enjoy the pleasures and amusements of Antioch. Armenia and Iberia, which had been independent kingdoms under Roman rule, were now made Persian provinces. The surrender of Nisibis of course put an end to the school which Jacob had established there, but his pupil Ephraim removed to Edessa and there it was quickly re-formed, so that Edessa became once more the centre of Syriac intellectual life. With this school, first at Nisibis, then at Edessa, we must connect the older Syriac martyrologies, and many of the Syriac translations and redactions of Greek Church manuals, canons, and theological writers. By this means we have preserved a Syriac version of many important works whose original Greek is lost, so that Syriac is of the utmost importance to the historian of the early Church.

Surrender of Nisibis to the Persians.

The terms of the peace made between Jovian and the Persians were felt as a great disgrace throughout the whole Roman Empire, and mark the "beginning of the end." Gibbon rightly remarks that "this ignominious peace has justly been considered as a memorable æra in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire." A digraceful peace.

In spite of the truce, petty warfare was continued on the part of the Persians, the Romans merely acting on the defensive, but even this grew less as advancing years rendered Shapur incapable of himself directing the military operations of his army. In 380 Shapur died at the age of seventy, the whole of his life having been spent on the Persian throne, as he had been a posthumous son "born in the purple." During the reigns of Shapur III and his son Bahram IV, Persia remained inactive: indeed, one of the first experiences of the Emperor Theodosius (379) was to receive a Persian embassy proposing friendly relations. This was mainly due to the fact that the Persians were suffering difficulties on their northern and eastern frontiers and wished to have their hands free in the west. Yet petty warfare continues.

In our third chapter we surveyed the history of the school of Antioch, and in the fourth the rise of monasticism: it seemed more convenient to examine the rise and development of institutions apart from external political events, with which in their early years they had little participation, in order that their real nature and influence might be more readily perceived. These may now be co-ordinated by noting that the flourishing period of the "middle school" under the leadership of Dorotheus, and the spread of monasticism through Syria and Mesopotamia, were contemporary with the disastrous expedition and peace of Julian and Jovian. The great bishop Jacob of Nisibis forms a connect- Co-ordination of events.

ing link between all three: as bishop he was contemporary with Shapur II, he encouraged Nisibis in its first resistance to the army of Shapur, he copied at Nisibis the example of Diodorus' school at Antioch, and he was the patron and benefactor of the monastery founded by Awgin on Mount Izla.

The death of Theodosius I, in 395, marks the final division between East and West in the Roman Empire.

Final division of the Roman Empire.

Henceforward the Western empire lives apart, having its own emperors for about a century, when the Western succession lapsed until its revival by Charlemagne. We are now concerned only with the Eastern emperors who ruled at Constantinople: for a time the Latin language was used for official purposes in the Eastern court, and the princes who ruled at Constantinople continued to call themselves Roman emperors, but in fact they were Greek-speaking rulers of a Greek state. But the process of disintegration reached further, and within the Eastern empire there begins a separation between the Eastern Greek element, and the more distinctly oriental in Syria and Asia generally.

In 399, the year after Chrysostom left Antioch to become bishop of Constantinople, the Persian king,

Izdikerti.

Bahram IV, was succeeded by his younger brother Izdikerti (399–420). Early in his reign Maruthas, bishop of Maiperkat in Mesopotamia, was sent by the emperor as Roman envoy to

Maruthas.

the Persian court. Maruthas quickly gained great influence over the Persian king, to the annoyance of the Zoroastrian Magi, and Izdikerti allowed the free extension of Christianity in Persia and the building of churches. Now under Persian rule Nisibis once more became a Christian city. The Persian Church at this period seems to

have received the more developed organization under which it lived until the time of the Mohammedan conquest. In its liturgy and official formularies, however, it retained the use of the Syriac language, and so claims a position within the sphere of Syrian life. Maruthas himself translated the canons of the Council of Nice into Syriac. For some time there had been bishops in Persia, and amongst these the bishop of Seleucia had precedence. About this time the bishop of Seleucia began to assume the title of Catholicus, a term copied from the civil administration of the empire, where it signified a procurator subordinate to a provincial governor: the name was used by the bishops of Seleucia in the sense that they were provincials over the Persian Church, subject to the metropolitan of Antioch, but ultimately the word was used to imply that they were catholic, or universal, bishops, the popes in fact of the communion which followed the teachings of Nestorius. In 410 a council was held in Seleucia under the presidency of Maruthas, to regulate the internal discipline of the Church of Persia: canons ascribed to this council are extant, and bear the name of Maruthas, but they are certainly spurious. The *Martyrology*, relating the sufferings of those who were put to death under Shapur II, inscribed to Maruthas is, however, believed to be genuine: portions of this work exist in the British Museum and in the Vatican.

The Persian Church.

"Catholicus."

Council of Seleucia.

Maruthas must be regarded as the organizer of the Persian Church, a work in which he was assisted by Isaac, who, at his suggestion at the Council of Seleucia, was appointed Catholicus, and by the friendly patronage of the king Izdikerti. Later in that reign the Persian bishop Abdas of Susa was associated with Maruthas, but

Abdas of Susa.

by his impetuosity, put an end to the good relations between the Persian king and the Christians. With tactless zeal Abdas destroyed one of the fire temples of the Zoroastrians: complaint was made to the king, and the bishop was ordered to restore the building, and make good all damage that he had committed. Abdas altogether refused to rebuild a heathen temple at his own expense, although Izdikerti threatened that, if he did not do so, he would destroy every church in his dominions. The result was that orders were issued for the destruction of all churches, and these were carried out by the Zoroastrians who had regarded with great envy the royal favour extended to Maruthas and his co-religionists, and before long the destruction of churches developed into a general persecution, in which Abdas was one of the first martyrs. It is difficult to know how far the king himself is responsible for this persecution: we might suppose that, to a large extent, it arose from resistance offered by Christians to those who were carrying out the royal order for the demolition of churches, and the force with which the destroyers responded to this resistance. When Izdikerti died in 420, and was succeeded by his son Bahram V, the persecution continued, and large numbers of Christians fled across the frontier into Roman territory. This partially hastened a new conflict which was being urged forward by other causes, partly because Roman labourers had been hired to work in the gold mines of Persia and were afterwards detained as slaves, partly because Roman merchants who had gone to trade in Persia had been plundered and all redress was refused. Bad feeling was further aroused by Bahram's demand for the surrender of the Christian fugitives, and so war was declared in 422.

Persecution.

The conflict commenced with Roman success in

Armenia, and the capture of a large number of Persian prisoners: the Romans then advanced into Persia and ravaged the border province of Azazene, but the seat of war was soon transferred to Mesopotamia where the Romans besieged Nisibis. The Persians were hard pressed in this siege and called in the Turks to their assistance, and the united armies marched to the relief of the city. The Romans were alarmed at the news of the large numbers of the Persian forces and raised the siege, but soon afterwards, when the Turks had retired, there was a general engagement in which the Romans inflicted a crushing defeat upon their adversaries, and compelled them to sue for peace. The ecclesiastical historian Socrates relates a noble act during this conflict. Acacius, the bishop of Amida, noticed that the numerous Persian captives who had been taken, no less than seven thousand in all, for the most part in the vicinity of his see, were suffering severely from famine and in great misery: calling together a synod of his clergy it was agreed, at his suggestion, that the sacred vessels used in their churches should be melted down and the proceeds applied to the relief of the captives. This was done, and Socrates remarks that "this exceptional benevolence of the admirable Acacius so astonished the Persian king, that he asserted that the Romans were resolved to overcome their enemies by benevolence in peace as well as by valour in war. It is also said that he greatly desired Acacius to visit him, and this wish was soon afterwards fulfilled by the command of the Emperor Theodosius" (Socr., *H. E.*, vii. 21).

War in Mesopotamia.

Acacius of Amida.

In our previous chapters we endeavoured to trace the rise and development of the Syrian Church up to the close of the fourth century, in our present we have noted the political events which began the

disintegration of the empire in the East, and finally brought about the separation of the Eastern from the oriental Churches. In tracing the growth of Syrian Church life we had to place Egypt side by side with Syria: in examining the beginnings of political disintegration in the Eastern empire we have had to pay more attention to Persia. Although the latter half of the fourth century was a period of so much distress in the Eastern provinces, which were exposed to the growing ambition of Persia, it was a time of extension of the Christian Church and of literary activity. This literary and ecclesiastical development appears in three clearly defined groups: (1) In the Greek school at Antioch, producing a series of great writers and teachers who exercised a powerful influence, not only over the Syrian, but over the whole Christian Church. (2) In the Syriac schools of Nisibis and Edessa, both connected, directly or indirectly, with the work of Jacob of Nisibis. Although no works of Jacob are extant, for the *Homilies* which pass under his name are really the work of the Persian Aphraates, the excellence of the activity of this school is proved by the writings of his pupil Ephraim, and by the mass of martyrologies and translations from the Greek which were its work. There are two minor writers of this same period, Balai (died 431), the author of *Poems* and *Homilies*, and Cyrillona (*circ.* 396) who also wrote *Poems*, but whether these had any definite connection with the school of Jacob cannot be said with any degree of certainty. Later, we shall have occasion to observe that the influence of the school spread and endured, producing a series of writers and teachers in the following century. (3) The third group is connected with the name of Maruthas, and the organization of the Persian

Greek school.

Syriac school.

Ephraim.

Balai.

Cyrillona.

Persian school.

Church. Beyond Maruthas himself this is not immediately connected with any literary effort, but it led the way to the formation of a Syriac literature in Persia, and ultimately of a Christian Persian literature.

VI

THE NESTORIAN SCHISM

THE controversies aroused by the Arian teaching are as important in their indirect as in their direct bearing.

Doctrine of the person of Christ.

The Council of Nice had decided that the Christian faith must teach the Deity of Christ; not of course that this was a new decision, it merely affirmed what had always been assumed, but it now decided that any teaching which proceeded on any other assumption exposed its author to excommunication; and it was decided that Christ must be so regarded as God as to be in all respects equal to the Father, uncreated and existing from all eternity; the question, however, remained undefined as to the manner in which this Deity had been present in the human body which Christ inhabited on earth. Neither His Deity nor the nature of His humanity were unknown to the earlier generations of Christians, but in their simpler faith they had never had to meet these philosophical difficulties.

Apollinaris.

Apollinaris, one of the leading opponents of Arianism and one who had distinguished himself in his resistance to Julian, now produced a new difficulty. He taught that man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit: the former was the material frame in which he lived and which he possessed in common with the lower creation; the spirit he took to signify the vital principle, the life which he possessed in common with the rest of the

sentient creatures, and apart from this was the immortal soul, the supernatural gift of God. In the case of Christ he supposed that this latter, the soul, was replaced by the indwelling Word. This went to the opposite extreme from Arius representing Christ as solely Deity, wearing a material body animated by physical life, but not possessing a human soul as well. Theodore of Mopsuestia, the pupil of Diodorus in the school of Antioch, was one of those who attacked this new view with greatest vigour, insisting that Christ was truly man as well as God, and as such, possessed of a human soul sensible to pain and grief, the Deity dwelling thus in One who was in all respects perfect man. Apollinaris left the Church in 375 and became the leader of a sect, but the question which he had raised continued to be a source of difficulty in the Church at large.

Opposed by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

In dealing with this matter there was a marked difference between the schools of Alexandria and Antioch. The former was most opposed to Arianism, and, although condemning Apollinaris, certainly inclined slightly towards his opinion. Admitting the presence of both Deity and human soul in Christ, the Alexandrian teachers held the fusion of these two, that is, the union of the human soul and God in the person of Christ. These views were rejected by the school of Antioch, which was strongly opposed to Apollinaris, bishop of the neighbouring town of Laodicea, and which maintained the co-existence but absolute distinction of the two persons in Christ. These views were supported by Diodorus and Theodore, who expressed the relation between the two natures in Christ as "connection" in place of the term "union" employed by the Alexandrian school. Partly this must be ascribed to reaction against the statements of Apollinaris, partly to the natural tendency of the Antiochene school which,

Difference between Egyptian and Syrian schools.

always averse to the mystical, endeavoured to emphasize the real humanity of Christ.

In 428 the important see of Constantinople was vacant, and the Emperor Theodosius, endeavouring to avoid strife by the appointment of a stranger, offered it to Nestorius, a presbyter of Antioch and an inmate of the monastery of Euprepius outside that city. Nestorius was an ardent follower of Diodorus and Theodore, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Antiochene school. The choice of a monk for so important a see is evidence of the great esteem in which monasticism was then held. He was consecrated bishop of Constantinople on April 10, 428, and entered upon the duties of his office by instigating a sharp persecution of the Arians. He had brought with him from Antioch a chaplain named Anastasius, who was also a devoted follower of Theodore of Mopsuestia and of the Antiochene school. Although the Arians were numerous in Constantinople, the bishop and his chaplain discovered that the main body of the Church there was attached to the Alexandrian doctrine of "union," and, in their opinion, dangerously inclined to the theories of Apollinaris. On this ground Anastasius preached a controversial sermon in which he endeavoured to point out the peril of the doctrine of "union," and especially attacked the popular use of the term "theotokos," or "mother of God" (*Dei Genetrix*, not *Dei Mater*), as applied to the Virgin Mary, for the Virgin, he declared, was the mother only of the material body, the spirit, and the human soul of Christ, the Deity entering the body after birth. This sermon caused a great sensation, for the term "theotokos" was in common use. Whether the discourse had been preached at the dictation of Nestorius or not we do not certainly know, but Nestorius now preached a

Nestorius bishop of Constantinople.

Anastasius his chaplain.

Sermon on the term "theotokos."

series of sermons of similar character, defending the teaching of his chaplain. It so happened that an African layman, Marcius Mercator, was then in Constantinople and, being greatly interested in the dispute, has left us a full account of these sermons and the controversies they excited.

Cyril of Alexandria.

News of Nestorius' action was soon carried to Egypt, where it aroused the keenest interest and formed the principal subject of discussion in every monastery, and divided the monks into two parties, each of which defended its views with the utmost ardour. In Alexandria it aroused opposition, for the Alexandrian school was entirely identified with the theory of "union," and abhorred Theodore's doctrine of "connection." In this opposition the lead was taken by Cyril, who had been called from the monastic life of the Nitrian desert to the see of Alexandria. To many the strong impetuous character of Cyril will be familiar from the pages of Kingsley's *Hypatia.*

It was Cyril's custom, at the beginning of every year, to send out a pastoral letter or homily for the instruction of his clergy. That which he put into circulation at the commencement of the year 429 was entirely occupied with a refutation of the teaching of Nestorius. Meanwhile Nestorius himself had admitted the use of the term "union," though still maintaining that Christ *became* God, and was not *born* God, so that the main part of the controversy now centred round the use of the term "theotokos."

Controversy inflamed.

During the early months of the year 429 the monks of Egypt were deeply occupied with the dispute. Reports of the sermons of Nestorius were in circulation in all the monasteries of Egypt and read with eager curiosity, until Cyril found it necessary, in April, to publish a refutation of their views, which refutation he sent round to the various monastic communities. Very soon a copy of this

document arrived at Constantinople, and a reply was prepared by Photius at Nestorius' direction. Several letters passed between the two bishops, but it is evident that neither wished to press the matter to an open rupture, though their more sober counsels were negatived by the zeal of intemperate followers. On the side of Cyril, a draft petition to the Emperor prepared by some of his more violent friends, calling for severe condemnation of Nestorius, was checked by the bishop of Alexandria; and it is known that in correspondence with a friend of Nestorius he expressed the great personal esteem in which he held him, and his own earnest desire to avoid a schism.

The dispute lasted for nearly two years, during which Cyril produced a series of able and polished treatises against the doctrines of Nestorius, and succeeded in gaining over to his side, not only the monks of Egypt, but also those of Constantinople and the whole of the Western Church. The dispute culminated in a letter from Cyril to Nestorius, which contained twelve denunciations of conclusions drawn from his writings and sermons, to which Nestorius only replied by the formulation of twelve denunciations of opinions of a contrary character. At last the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian summoned a council of bishops to meet at Ephesus to terminate the controversy. This council assembled on June 22, 431. John bishop of Antioch and the other Syrian bishops had been delayed by unforeseen circumstances, and had not yet arrived when the council opened. Instead of waiting, the bishops at Ephesus, almost all followers of the Alexandrian school of theology, at once proceeded to examine the doctrines of Nestorius, and, in the space of a few hours, condemned them and declared the deposition of Nestorius. Five days later John of Antioch and his companions arrived, full of indignation at this summary procedure.

Council of Ephesus.

John of Antioch.

Rival council.

As soon as John had reached the city, the few bishops of the Antiochene school who had been present at the council and the Syrian bishops who had come with John, assembled at his lodging, and "before they had shaken the dust off their feet, or taken off their cloaks" (Cyril, *Ep. ad Cœlest.*), passed a sentence of deposition on Cyril and his supporters. Both parties then appealed to the Emperor, and after long negotiations, Theodosius at length gave his unqualified support to Cyril and confirmed the deposition of Nestorius, who was sent back to his former home in the monastery of Euprepius.

Division between Alexandria and Antioch.

Although Cyril was thus victorious, the result was practically a schism between Alexandria and Antioch, for the Syrians utterly refused to recognize the proceedings of the council at Ephesus before the arrival of the bishop of Antioch. For three years this state of affairs continued, and then the bishop of Antioch made overtures of peace. For this there were two reasons evident, besides the very proper desire to heal a schism. In the first place, one of the bishops who dwelt within the province of Antioch, Rabbula of Edessa, had himself entered upon negotiations with Alexandria, so that the Antiochene party was divided within itself. Again, during these three years Nestorius had been an inmate of the monastery of Euprepius just outside the gate of Antioch, and it appears that in some manner there had arisen strained relations between the ex-patriarch of Constantinople and the bishop of Antioch. At length, in 433, the two parties arrived at a compromise, the anathemas uttered on both sides were withdrawn, those against the extremer conclusions drawn from Nestorius' teachings alone excepted, the deposition of Nestorius was recognized by the Church of Antioch, and he was banished from the monastery of Euprepius to Arabia.

The result of this agreement was an internal schism

within the Syrian Church, the followers of Nestorius entirely refusing communion with the bishop of Antioch and forming a separate body which still exists as the largest Christian communion in Asia; in the West it is commonly spoken of as the Nestorian body, but its own members claim the name of the Chaldæan Church. The school of Antioch also felt the effects of this rupture; the greater number of its members, faithful to the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodorus, left Antioch and took refuge at Edessa. This marks the end of the "middle school," the anti-Nestorian remnant at Antioch forming the nucleus of the "later school," whilst those who had separated founded a new school at Edessa, which becomes Syriac-Persian, just as the school at Antioch had been Greek. The community at Edessa found already there the remnants of the former school of Nisibis, which had been reorganized under the efforts of Maris, a Persian Christian, who had translated the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia into Syriac, and under whose leadership the Edessene school had been identified with the views which had been recognized as characteristic of Antioch. At the time of the new arrivals from Antioch, Maris was no longer at Edessa, having been made bishop of Hardischir in Persia, but his work was carried on by a scholar named Ihibha or Ibas, in spite of the opposite views of the bishop Rabbula, and the school was of sufficient eminence and so far identified with the doctrines of Theodore as to attract the emigrants from Antioch.

Nestorian schism.

School of Edessa.

Maris.

Rabbula is a figure which now claims our attention. He was the son of a heathen priest at Chalcis, but his mother was a Christian. After his father's death he was chosen prefect of Chalcis, so that he must have been a member of one of the leading families there. Under the influence of his

Rabbula.

mother he married a Christian wife, and soon afterwards became a member of the Church himself, mainly through the efforts of Acacius of Berœa, the bishop who had behaved with so great charity towards the Persian prisoners. After visiting Jerusalem he agreed with his wife to separate, his wife entering a convent, and he becoming an inmate of the monastery of St. Abraham at Chalcis. As the rule of this monastery did not appear to him sufficiently severe, he left his companions and dwelt alone for some time as a hermit. Convinced of the unsatisfactory character of this solitary life, he returned to the monastery and, some time afterwards, was appointed bishop of Edessa (A.D. 412). Like all the Syrians he was a follower of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and was one of those bishops who, at Ephesus, had joined in condemning Cyril. Throughout, however, he seems to have doubted the soundness of Nestorius' position, and during a visit to Constantinople, in the winter of 431–432, he became an ardent and thorough partisan of Cyril of Alexandria. On his return to Edessa he came forward as a vigorous opponent of Nestorius, and attacked the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia as the source of the Nestorian, and wrote to Cyril warning him to use every effort to prevent the circulation of Theodore's works (Rabbula's *Ep. to Cyril*, Labbe, v. 469). His representations so far prevailed upon Cyril that he procured an imperial decree ordering the confiscation and destruction of any writings of Diodorus and Theodore.

Events at Edessa.

The Church at Edessa was divided—some approved of the bishop's action, but the majority who had been educated in the principles of the school of Antioch regarded his conduct with repugnance. On his side, however, were the monks and nuns, and a portion of the parochial clergy, whilst others of the presbyters and the bulk of the laity were of the contrary opinions. The leader of these latter

was the Ihibha or Ibas we have already mentioned, the friend of Maris, the former head of the Edessene school, and now the bishop of Hardaschir. Ihibha had visited Ephesus in the company of Rabbula at the time of the council, and much of Rabbula's subsequent conduct is known to us from Ihibha's correspondence with Maris. Ihibha seems to have been able to take a perfectly calm and judicial view of contemporary history; although a follower of Nestorius he freely points out rash or extravagant statements in Nestorius' utterances; Rabbula he describes as playing the tyrant in Edessa. Like other moderates Ihibha was willing to use the term "theotokos," provided it was clearly understood that the human soul and the Deity in Christ, though united, were distinct, and that the union did not imply fusion as was generally deducible from the Alexandrian statement. He considered that the violent and intemperate conduct of such men as Rabbula, and even as Cyril, was responsible for the schism far more than the doctrinal difficulty. Yet he was so far firmly attached to the teachings of Theodore, that he felt difficulties about remaining in communion with a bishop who had pronounced an anathema against them, and a letter of his is extant, asking the advice of Andrew bishop of Samosata as to whether he and other presbyters of Edessa ought to risk a schism by a public denunciation of Rabbula. Andrew's reply is not extant.

Ihibha's letter.

Meanwhile Rabbula was continuing his persecution of the followers of Nestorius. At the time Barsuma, a devoted disciple of Theodore, was at the head of the school, and with him was associated Ihibha, who had only recently translated the works of Diodorus, Theodore, and Nestorius into Persian. Rabbula is generally credited with the expulsion of Barsuma from Edessa, but as we learn from Bar Hebræus that he was still in the city in 449,

Barsuma.

the bishop must be held clear of that charge. Rabbula indeed acted more wisely in translating into Syriac Cyril's long letter to Theodosius refuting the teaching of Nestorius. This translation is not known to survive, but we still possess the text of a sermon which Rabbula preached at Constantinople against the Nestorian doctrines, a sermon on almsgiving, fragments of letters, some canons, and hymns.

Rabbula's literary work.

Besides being a controversialist and writer, Rabbula, whose activity equalled that of Cyril, was a reformer of ecclesiastical discipline, and is responsible for enforcing the use of the Peshitta text of the Gospels in place of the diatessaron of Tatian, which seems to have attained almost universal use in Syria. Theodoret, the ecclesiastical historian, pointed out to Rabbula and to the Church generally points in which it seemed that the diatessaron favoured the Nestorian position; the slightest suspicion of this kind aroused Rabbula, and his energies were devoted to displacing the diatessaron and enforcing the "separated Gospel." It is supposed that some harmonizing interpolations in the Syrian Greek text may be due to the long use of the diatessaron.

Rabbula's reforms.

Rabbula died in 435, and Ihibha was appointed bishop. Great as Ihibha was, there can be no doubt that it was a mistake to select one who had been so strongly identified with current controversy. So strong a man as Rabbula had formed a definite party, and this now began to oppose Ihibha as he had opposed his predecessor. A very objectionable feature of this opposition was that it had the secret support and encouragement of a neighbouring bishop, Uranius of Himeria. Instigated by Uranius four presbyters of Edessa openly denounced Ihibha for heresy, and appealed to the Emperor Theodosius, who referred

Ihibha bishop of Edessa.

Opposition to him.

the matter to John of Antioch. John, however, refused to condemn Ihibha.

As soon as John was dead, and Domnus had taken his place as bishop of Antioch, the opposition party renewed its efforts (A.D. 442). Ihibha heard of the proceedings of his opponents, and excommunicated two, Cyrus and Eulogius by name, who had carried the complaint to Antioch. Three years later (445) Domnus held a synod, but took the position rather of an arbitrator endeavouring to promote peace than that of a judge; by his efforts a temporary agreement was made. But this did not satisfy the monastic party at Edessa, and, still urged on by the persistency of Uranias, after a further three years' interval, another council was held, and a series of trifling charges of bad administration of the funds of the Church of Edessa as well as the old accusation of heresy were brought forward. Only nine bishops were present at this synod, and, after a full hearing, Ihibha was discharged. His enemies were, however, persistent, and again appeal was made to Constantinople, and an Imperial rescript was obtained constituting a commission to try Ihibha. The members of this commission were the bishops of Tyre, Berytus, Damascus, and Ihibha's old enemy, Uranius of Himeria. They met at Berytus, and, after full inquiry, Ihibha was again exonerated, only the bishop of Himeria dissenting.

Synod at Antioch.

Synod at Berytus.

Again an appeal was made to Constantinople, and this time the accusers contrived to get the Emperor entirely on their side. Ihibha was arrested and imprisoned at Antioch, whilst a council dealt with his case at Ephesus (A.D. 449). Only Ihibha's enemies had part in this synod, which Leo of Rome described as a "gang of robbers." In his absence the Bishop of Edessa was tried, deposed, and excommunicated, Nonnus being appointed bishop of Edessa in his place.

The "gang of robbers."

Soon afterwards Theodosius died, and the government fell to his sister Pulcheria and her husband Marcian. The matter was now re-opened by the influence of Leo of Rome, whose legates had been refused a hearing at Ephesus. By his efforts a new council was gathered at Chalcedon in 451, which restored Ihibha to the see of Edessa, which he held until his death in 457.

Ihibha restored.

The Council of Chalcedon was a reaction against the extreme anti-Nestorian position of Cyril and the Alexandrian party, but it proved the beginning of new controversies and difficulties which must be reserved for separate discussion in our next chapter.

Council of Chalcedon.

So far we have followed the schism due to the teaching of Nestorius; as yet it has appeared rather as a controversy within the Church, but the Christians in Mesopotamia and Persia for the most part refused to accept the decrees of the 431 Council of Ephesus. Gradually these dissentients organized themselves as a separate communion, and, under Persian protection, became the dominant Church in central Asia, where they still continue their existence. In the West Nestorianism has never been an important factor, neither has it extended to the Egyptian Church, but has remained a purely Asiatic form of Christianity. Its subsequent history, however, will be better reserved until we discuss the revival of Persia, with which it was closely connected.

Oriental character of Nestorianism.

The period of the Nestorian controversy was one of great literary activity amongst the Syriac-speaking community. We have already mentioned the works of Rabbula and of Ihibha. Some records of the council of Ephesus, the "robber gang" which deposed Ihibha, have been preserved in Syriac, and have been published both in the Syriac text and in an English translation by Mr. Perry.

Literary activity.

Acacius of Amida, the same who so generously liberated the Persian prisoners of war, was also a writer of this period, but none of his works are known to be extant. No doubt he was of the party of Nestorius, as his letters were made the subject of a commentary by Maris of Hardaschir.

Such controversies as we have been considering are not the most attractive side of history, but in the case of Syria it is absolutely necessary to understand their general bearings, and, indeed, they throw a great and essential light upon the history of the Empire in the East. The Nestorian controversy produced the Nestorian or Chaldee community, the oriental, as distinguished from the Eastern, that is, the Greek, Church: it has its own history, and produced a distinguished series of writers and teachers: there is a Nestorian monasticism and there are Nestorian liturgies, and as the relations of Nestorians and Greeks were most unfriendly after the council of 431, the points of agreement are generally taken as proving conditions of earlier date. To speak of the Nestorians as the oriental Church is not merely a reference to their geographical position, but their participation in Persian life and their friendly relations with the Jews engendered a new oriental character which distinguishes them from the Greek Church. Politically, the resentment felt by the Nestorians at their treatment in the Roman Empire explains the subsequent presence of a Christian body in Persia, constantly urging the Persian king against Rome. Gradually the whole Church was separating into four great bodies, the Western, the Eastern, the oriental, and the Egyptian, and the two latter of these were only checked in their development by the rise of a new factor in Mohammedanism, which obtained the ascendency in Asia and Africa. But this factor had not yet appeared upon the scene at the close of the first half of the fifth century.

Importance of the schism.

We have already noted that Bar-Suma, expelled from Edessa by a popular riot instigated by the monks against the Nestorians, retired to Nisibis, and there founded a school of definitely Nestorian character. Amongst his first companions at Nisibis was Narsai, a poet who is said to have written 360 metrical homilies in six-syllable metre, as well as other hymns which appear to have been used in the Offices of the Nestorian Church, and Biblical homilies in prose (specimens of verse in Gismondi, *Linguæ Syr. Gramm. et Chrestom.*, p. 103). Another of Bar-Suma's followers, Micah, bishop of Lashom, wrote commentaries upon the books of Kings and a tract on the liturgical use of the Psalter.

School of Nisibis.

Micah.

Maris, the bishop of Hardaschir, who has been mentioned as the correspondent of Ihibha, translated the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia into Syriac. In 420 he was made *catholicus* of Seleucia by the Persian king Izdikerti, but after some time fell into disfavour and was deprived of his office and sent back to Hardaschir.

Maris.

Besides translating the works of Theodore, the great theologian of the Nestorians, translations were made of some of the works of Aristotle, of the *Ecclesiastical History* and *Theophania* of Eusebius, as well as of the *Clementine Recognitions*. The actual translators of these works are unknown, save in the case of the Syriac version of Aristotle's περὶ ἑρμενείας, which is traditionally ascribed to Probus, but the work was done either at Edessa or at the Nestorian school at Nisibis. Thus we see the Nestorians rendering into Syriac the chief Greek sources of philosophy, theology, and Church history, by the help of which material they inaugurated a system of education which did much towards the extension of their doctrines in the East.

Translations from the Greek.

In 462 Firuz became king of Persia, and Bar-Suma,

then bishop of Nisibis as well as head of the school there, represented to the king that the Nestorian body was definitely hostile to the Roman Empire which had persecuted and expelled it. Influenced by these arguments Firuz granted his favour and protection to the Nestorians, who thus became the state-recognized Christian community in Persia. In 489, as the remnant of the school at Edessa remained attached to the doctrines of Nestorius, the Emperor Zeno finally closed the school, and its last members withdrew to Nisibis.

Nestorians protected in Persia.

Ten years later the Nestorian bishops held a synod at Seleucia, and formally repudiated the celibacy of the clergy, a practice which was extremely repugnant to Persian prejudices. Thus the Nestorian Church became more and more oriental in its character. At the same time its members cultivated friendly relations with the Jews, and adopted some Judaistic observances in their festivals.

Synod of Seleucia.

Syriac fiction originated amongst the Nestorians. The earliest work of this type was a trilogy of romances dealing with (i) the life of Constantine, (ii) the life of Eusebius of Rome and the Emperor Julian, and (iii) the life of Jovian. These are romances pure and simple, but well written and full of interest as pictures of Syrian life and thought (pub. Hoffmann, *Julianos der Abtrunnige*, 1880; extracts in Gismondi, *Ling. Syr. Gr. et Chres.*, 140–147). Another romance, of about the same period, also deals with Julian (Hoffmann, *op. cit.*). Not quite of the same character is the Biblical romance known as Mearath Gazze, or "Cave of Treasures" (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 25875, 7199).

Syriac fiction.

Amongst the same Nestorian circles, probably, originated the valuable *Chronicle of Edessa*, a compilation from the records of Edessa brought down to the year 540. The earlier portions are very brief, but those relating to A.D. 202–540

Chronicle of Edessa.

are much fuller (*Cod. Vat.*, clxiii. ed. Gebhardt, and Harnack's *Texte u. Unters*, ix. 1, 1892).

Narsai, who succeeded Bar-Suma as head of the school of Nisibis, was himself succeeded by his nephew Abraham, who compiled commentaries on the Old Testament. He in turn was followed by John of Nisibis, who also compiled commentaries as well as hymns and controversial tracts. The next head was Joseph Huzaya, the first Syriac grammarian, who invented a new system of punctuation and of vowel points which is now generally used in MSS. of Eastern origin, and is known as the Nestorian pointing.

Abraham.

Joseph Huzaya.

Another important work of the Nestorians of Edessa and Nisibis was the formation of the Syriac Masora, collections of difficult and dubious readings in the Peshitta, although this work was carried out more thoroughly by the rival Jacobite Church, of which we shall speak later.

The Masora.

This was the period of great missionary enterprise on the part of the Nestorians, a thing which was greatly facilitated by the extension of Persian authority eastwards by Kushru I. Nestorian teachers advanced into central Asia, India, and even China, and thus Nestorianism became definitely the Church of the East.

Church of Malabar.

When, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese found their way into India, they discovered a Christian community settled at Malabar, the state which occupied the south-western coast, and this Church acknowledged the supremacy of the Catholicus of Seleucia and used a Syriac liturgy. As Nestorian heretics, these Christians of Malabar suffered severely under Portuguese rule, but when the Portuguese power declined, they again asserted their independence of Rome and renewed allegiance to the Catholicus of Seleucia. From Malabar comes the important Syriac version of the Diatagai, now in the

Cambridge University library. An inscription discovered at Siganfu, as well as the evidence of Syriac and Chinese historians, proves the spread of Nestorian missions as far as China.

Although Nestorianism became practically the Persian Church, it remained in some respects Syriac, and Syriac was used as the language of its liturgy, just as Latin has remained the liturgical language of the Roman communion. At present the Nestorian Church survives in Mesopotamia, under the name of the Assyrian or Chaldee Church.

VII

THE JACOBITE SCHISM

CYRIL of Alexandria, the great opponent of Nestorius, died in 444, and was succeeded as bishop of Alexandria by the archdeacon Dioscorus, who at first enjoyed an excellent repute, but, after he had been involved in theological controversy, surpassed all his contemporaries in violence and bigotry. Like all the Alexandrian clergy he was bitterly opposed to the speculations of Nestorius, and persecuted all his followers in Egypt with exceptional rigour. Most of the leading bishops in those days had command of a considerable degree of temporal power, and Dioscorus is stated to have laid waste property, inflicted fines, driven adversaries into exile, and even had recourse to imprisonment and death. Mansi has preserved the petition of one Sophronius in which the petitioner pleads that Dioscorus had usurped in Egypt the authority which properly belonged to the Imperial power alone (Mansi, vi. 1029).

Dioscorus of Alexandria.

Dioscorus had thus taken his place as an extreme opponent of Nestorianism when a new controversy arose. At Constantinople there was an aged monk named Eutyches, the head of one of the principal monasteries and a personal friend of Cyril of Alexandria. In his vigorous opposition to Nestorianism Eutyches employed the phrase "one incarnate nature of God the Word." This phrase had actually been employed by Cyril, but it had been

Eutyches.

qualified by an explanation which saved it from the appearance of Apollinarianism. Eutyches, however, used it without qualification as describing the two natures, the Divine and the human, fused into one in the person of Christ, an exaggeration of the Alexandrian doctrine of "union." According to this Christ was altogether God, so that it might even be said that God was crucified, and not merely that the material body and human soul of Christ suffered.

Eusebius of Dorylæum complains.

After some time Eusebius, bishop of Dorylæum, made a formal complaint to Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, that Eutyches had revived the Apollinarian heresy. This Eusebius was the same who, as a layman, had complained about Nestorius, and so as bishop he now had to attack the contrary opinion: the scrupulous advocate of rigid orthodoxy, who had to suffer at the hands of both extreme parties. He was himself a follower of the more moderate Antiochene school, and so by no means inclined to tolerate any tendency to Apollinarianism.

Eutyches condemned.

In 448 Flavian held a council to consider the charges brought by Eusebius, and as a result Eutyches was condemned. At once Eutyches wrote to Dioscorus of Alexandria and enlisted his assistance, for the Egyptian bishop was far more suspicious of any tendency to Nestorianism than of any in the contrary direction.

Supporters of Eutyches.

Eutyches had on his side Chrysaphius, the Imperial chamberlain, and the Empress Eudoxia. These three, the empress, the chamberlain, and the bishop of Alexandria, obtained an Imperial rescript commanding the assembling of a council at Ephesus in 449. This council, over which Dioscorus of Alexandria presided, was the very same "gang of robbers" to which we have already made reference in relating the story of Ihibha, a synod inflamed by violent hatred

The "gang of robbers."

of Nestorianism and altogether in the hands of extremists of the opposite school of thought. Its proceedings were characterized with the utmost violence, and were constantly interrupted by the clamours raised by the Alexandrian partisans. When Eusebius' name was mentioned they cried out: "Away with Eusebius, burn him, let him be buried alive—let him be cut in pieces." The Alexandrians then fell upon him and he was with difficulty led away to prison, where he died soon afterwards from the blows and kicks which had been showered upon him. Hilary, the Roman legate, only escaped personal violence by flight, and reported the scandalous proceedings to his bishop Leo, who, in his indignation, applied to the council the title which history has generally endorsed. As has already been related, Ihibha was deposed and excommunicated for his Nestorianism; for opposing Eutyches Flavian was deprived of the see of Constantinople and banished, while the sentence passed against Eutyches in the preceding year was reversed.

But the Alexandrian party had overreached itself in its violence. Two years later the Council of Chalcedon reversed all the decrees passed at Ephesus; Ihibha was restored, Dioscorus of Alexandria was deposed, and the decree passed against Eutyches in 448 was re-enforced, and the doctrine of the "fusion" of the two natures into one in the person of Christ was condemned. Council of Chalcedon.

A certain Palestinian monk named Theodosius, who was at this council, heard the condemnation of Eutyches with the utmost indignation. On his return to Palestine he created great disturbances by preaching against its decisions, and in this was encouraged by the Empress Eudoxia, now a widow. Again the Church was troubled by a schism; just as those who had refused to recognize the decrees of Ephesus in 431 separated and formed Theodosius.

the Nestorian body, so those who rejected the decisions of Chalcedon twenty years later formed a separate body known as the Eutychian, or Monophysite ("one nature"), or, later on, as the Jacobite, Church. As the Nestorians, originating in the Antiochene school, held their own in the inland parts of Syria and Persia, so the Monophysite party centred in Egypt and along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. This threefold division has remained to the present day throughout the oriental Church.

Encouraged by Eudoxia, Theodosius collected a body of followers who sacked and burned Jerusalem, the bishop Juvenal only saving his life by flight, and for more than a year the city was in the hands of the Monophysite rebels. At length the Imperial forces put down the insurrection, although Theodosius saved himself and fled to Sinai, where he spent the rest of his life in a friendly monastery out of the reach of the Emperor.

Disorder in Judæa.

Meanwhile the decrees of Chalcedon had awakened opposition in Egypt. The council had deposed Dioscorus, and a presbyter named Proterius was elected in his place. But the Egyptian monk refused to recognize Dioscorus' deposition and, influenced by Theodosius' bad example, stirred up a general riot in Alexandria. Proterius dared not go abroad without a guard of soldiers, and the whole city was in an uproar, the Imperial government being practically helpless. At last the monks beat back the soldiery and compelled them to take refuge in the Serapeum, where they were burned alive.

Egypt Monophysite.

In 457 the Emperor Marcian was succeeded by Leo I. At this the Monophysite clergy and monks of Alexandria elected a new bishop Timotheus, a great friend of the deposed Dioscorus, who had lately died in exile. The Imperial power was now, however, stronger; Proterius was restored and Timotheus banished.

Leo I Emperor.

The strife continued until the year 474, when Leo I was replaced by Leo II, and soon after by Zeno. The Emperor Zeno was definitely a Monophysite, and forthwith that party found itself in the ascendant. For a brief period, indeed, the throne was usurped by Basiliscus, who came forward as a Monophysite of more extreme character, but Zeno succeeded in restoring his authority. During the fifth century there was no political party apart from current theological factions. After getting rid of Basiliscus, Zeno was extremely anxious to terminate the schism, which was indeed dangerous to the stability of the Empire. For this purpose, in 482, the Emperor drew up a confession of faith of modified Monophysite character, which, he hoped, would prove a basis of union. About the same time the decree was published that monks might not visit cities, a decree due to the events which had taken place at Alexandria and Constantinople during the Monophysite controversy.

Zeno Emperor: a Monophysite.

The Monophysite dispute had not left Syria untouched. At Antioch there had arrived in 463 a monk named Peter the Fuller, like most of the monks of the time a sympathizer with the views of Eutyches, and he contrived to throw a suspicion of Nestorianism upon the bishop Martyrius. As a result Martyrius was deposed in 471, and Peter elected in his place. At once he declared himself a thorough-going Monophysite and denounced the decrees of Chalcedon.

Monophysites in Syria.

Peter the Fuller.

In the Antiochene, as in the Alexandrian liturgy, there occurs the hymn known as the "trisagion"—"Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us." To this Peter added the words "Who was crucified for us," in order to emphasize the Monophysite view that it was God who was crucified, that is to say, that the two natures were in Christ so united as to be inseparable. Before long Peter came

to be recognized as one of the great leaders of the Monophysite party, which thus became almost as prominent at Antioch as it was at Alexandria. Meanwhile Martyrius had procured his restoration from the Emperor Leo, but his position at Antioch was so intolerable owing to Peter's opposition, that he voluntarily resigned, and again Peter occupied the episcopal throne. The Emperor was indignant at this, and commanded Peter's deposition and banishment; but Peter went to Constantinople and was allowed to live there in peace. During the brief reign of Basiliscus Peter was restored to his see, and employed the opportunity to treat his opponents with considerable violence. When Zeno published the "Henoticon," as his confession of faith was called, Peter consented to accept it, and was confirmed in his bishopric.

The Imperial "Henoticon," however, was not pronounced enough to satisfy the extremer Monophysites, who still held apart. The Roman Church, on the other hand, rejected it as going too far. This is the beginning of the separation between the Western and Eastern Churches to which various events had been tending for some time previously. To please his Monophysite supporters Zeno, in 489, expelled the school from Edessa on the ground of its Nestorian tendencies, and thus the Nestorian body was definitely thrown into Persian surroundings.

Zeno expels school from Edessa.

Without continuing further the history of the Monophysites or of the Church at large, it will be sufficient to notice that their views were ultimately rejected by the Eastern as well as the Western Church, but that these views were finally adopted by the Egyptian and Ethiopian Churches as well as by the Western section of the Syrian.

Returning to the career of the Monophysites in Syria we note that they languished after the termina-

tion of the pontificate of Peter the Fuller, until the appointment of Severus as bishop of Antioch in 511. Severus was an ardent Monophysite and had been an intimate friend of the monk Theodosius and Peter the Fuller, and had himself been at various times the inmate of different monasteries all of distinctly Monophysite tone. When Zeno had published the "Henoticon" Severus was one of those who refused to accept it as being not sufficiently Monophysite in its character. Later on Severus appeared at Constantinople at the head of a band of two hundred Monophysite monks and induced the bishop Anastasius to adopt the addition which Peter the Fuller had made to the "trisagion." The result was a series of sanguinary riots led by rival bands of monks in which the Monophysites were finally beaten. This was in 511, and, the see of Antioch being vacant at the time, Severus was chosen bishop. One of his first acts was to pronounce an anathema against the "Henoticon" and the decrees of Chalcedon. To strengthen his position he made a formal alliance with the bishop of Alexandria, an alliance which still remains unbroken between the Monophysite prelates of the Syrian and Egyptian Churches.

Severus of Antioch.

In 518 Justin became Emperor, and declared himself against the Monophysites. To escape punishment Severus fled to Alexandria, the stronghold of the Monophysites : the anniversary of his arrival in Egypt being long celebrated as one of the holy days of the Monophysite communion. At Alexandria internal divisions arose within the Monophysite body, but these do not directly concern our present history. The Emperor Justin, a man of no education and little interested in theological disputes, simply desired peace. The populace of Constantinople had now become definitely anti-Monophysite, and Justin followed the popular will in declaring his adherence to the decrees of the

Justin Emperor.

council of Chalcedon, and in pronouncing all who refused those decrees as incapable of holding any civil office.

Renewed intercourse between Greek and Latin Churches.

This position, and the deposition of Severus, produced a reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches, for the time at least. At the special request of the Pope the new bishop of Antioch, Paul, who was chosen when Severus fled to Egypt, was consecrated at Antioch instead of at Alexandria, as had been customary. This terminated the rivalry between Rome and Alexandria in favour of the former, the Monophysite position of Alexandria entirely removing her from primacy over the Eastern Churches and so being one of the principal reasons for the advance of the Roman claims. *Letters of Severus*, Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 12181.

Justin persecutes the Monophysites.

In 519 Justin began the rigorous expulsion of all bishops who would not accept the decisions of the council of Chalcedon. Amongst those who suffered under this persecution were several who distinguished themselves in Syriac literature, including Mara bishop of Amida, Paul bishop of Callinicus, Philoxenus bishop of Marbogh, and the abbot John bar-Aphtonya, who presided over the monastery of St. Thomas at Seleucia on the Orontes.

Mara of Amida.

Mara bishop of Amida is stated to have been the author of a commentary on the Gospels (Asseman, *B.O.* ii. 52), but it is now generally believed that he merely wrote short prefaces in Greek, and it is not known that he translated these into Syriac. (Zacharias Rhetor in Land, *Anecd. Syr.* iii. 250 *sqq.*) When banished in 519, he went to Petra, but was afterwards allowed to join the other Monophysites at Alexandria.

Philoxenus had been consecrated bishop of Marbogh by Peter the Fuller in 485. By birth he was a Persian, his original name being ܐܘܓܝܢ, a Syriac

form of the Greek *ξένος*, and this he Hellenized to Philoxenus at his consecration. Early in his career he distinguished himself as a preacher against the Nestorians, and, on going into Syria, he became a missionary of Monophysite doctrine. He took a leading part in the deposition of Flavian of Antioch in 512, and presided over the synod which appointed Severus Patriarch of Antioch. The persecution of 519 sent Philoxenus to Philippopolis in Thrace, and thence he was afterwards sent to Gangra in Paphlygonia. About 508 he caused a new translation of the New Testament and Psalms from the Greek into Syriac, to be prepared by his assistant bishop Polycarp. This version, much more literal in its rendering than the Peshitta, was used by the Monophysites until the beginning of the seventh century, when it was revised by another bishop of Marbogh, Thomas of Harkel. As the Harkelean version superseded the Philoxenian, copies of the latter are now very rare (Gospels in *Cod. A. 2 Bibl. Angelica* at Rome). It is interesting to note that three revised versions, those respectively of Philoxenus, of Thomas of Harkel, and of Paul of Tella, appeared in the Monophysite community. Philoxenus also wrote a commentary on the Gospels (fragments in Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 14534 and 17126), sermons (ed. Budge, *Discourses of Philoxenus*, 1894), controversial tracts in defence of Monophysite doctrine (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 12164), and letters. Next to the Patriarch Severus, Philoxenus must be regarded as one of the great founders of the Monophysite community.

Philoxenus of Marbogh.

Paul of Callinicus found a refuge after the persecution of 519 at Edessa, and there translated the works of Severus of Antioch into Syriac. Amongst these translations were versions of three of Severus' treatises against Julian (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 17200, 12158), against the Manichees, and

Paul of Callinicus.

against John Grammaticus of Cæsarea (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 12157, 17210–1), as well as of the *Philalethes* (extract in *Cod. Vat.* cxl.), the *Homiliæ Cathedrales* (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 14599), and Severus' correspondence with Julian of Halicarnassus on the incorruptibility of the body of Christ, one of the subjects which produced internal schism amongst the Monophysites at Alexandria (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 17200), and with Sergius Grammaticus (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 17154). The result of these labours was that Paul of Callinicus supplied the Syriac-speaking Monophysites with a complete body of dogmatic and controversial theology, and so may be regarded as one of the founders of the Monophysite body. The date of his death is unknown, but he was alive in 528.

John bar-Aphtonya.

John bar-Aphtonya, abbot of the monastery of St. Thomas, was also expelled by Justin, and, followed by the whole monastic community, he withdrew to Kenneshre on the Euphrates, where they established a new convent which became a centre of Greek scholarship in Syria and a kind of Monophysite university. John bar-Aphtonya wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs (extracts in Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 12168), hymns (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 12174), and a life of Severus. His own life was afterwards written by one of his monks (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 12174).

Jacob of Serugh.

These men of whom we have spoken were all active participators in the Monophysite schism, as well as writers and scholars, and their work has all a more or less controversial character. There were others, however, in the Monophysite body who were distinguished by their literary work but do not appear to have been actively involved in the troubles of the times. The chief of these was Jacob of Serugh, a contemporary of Philoxenus and Severus. In 519—the very year of the deprivation of the Monophysite bishops by

Justin—he was made bishop of Batnæ in Serugh, a district of Osrhœne. This date has caused many to suppose that he was not a Monophysite, a view supported by Asseman and Abeloos, but sufficiently refuted by three letters from Jacob to the monks of Harim and a letter to Paul of Edessa, all of which have been edited by the Abbé Martin (*Z.D.M.G.* xxx. 217–219, 1876), which clearly prove his Monophysite position, although he appears to have avoided all active participation in current controversy. He was the son of a presbyter of Kurtam in Serugh, and was born in 451. About the year 503 he appears as a *periodeutes* or Vicar General of the neighbouring diocese of Haura, but he seems to have led a quiet and studious life, taking no part in the ecclesiastical politics of the day. A *periodeutes*, it may be remarked, was an episcopal deputy, not himself a bishop, and so occupied only in the discipline and administration of the diocese: a *chorepiscopus* was also an episcopal deputy, but with this difference, that he was himself consecrated bishop and so could also ordain. When appointed bishop of Batnæ, he was already 67 years of age and only occupied the see for two and a half years. His literary works include a life of Mar Hannina, six festal homilies (German trans. by Zingerle, *Sechs Homilien des h. Jacob v. Sarug*—Syriac text of one in Zingerle, *Mon. Syr.* i. 91), other sermons and letters (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 14587, 17163; cf. Abbé Martin in *Z.D.M.G.* xxx.). He is also the reputed author of a liturgy and order of baptism (*Lit. in Renaudot*, ii. 356; Baptism in Assemani, *Cod. Liturg.* ii. 309, iii. 184). His real fame, however, rests on his poetical works, which include 763 metrical homilies, of which nearly 300 are known to survive in various European libraries, although few of these have as yet been published. (Some in Cureton, *Anc. Syriac Docs.;* Budge, *Hist. of Alexander the Great;* Abbeloos, *de vita et*

scriptis S. Jacob Batnarum; Zingerle, *Mon. Syr.*; Mœsinger, *Mon. Syr.*, etc.). Jacob of Serugh is especially associated with the use of the twelve-syllable line, written variously in four groups of three syllables each, or three groups of four, five, and three, or of four, three, and five. Dr. Wright's opinion is that Jacob of Serugh as a poet is superior to either Ephraim or Isaac of Antioch.

With Jacob of Serugh we must associate Simeon Kukaya, a deacon of humble position, who worked as a potter in Geshir, a village near Harim, where was a convent in which Jacob took a great interest. This village potter used to compose poems at his work, and copies of some of these were brought by the monks of Harim to Jacob. The bishop visited the potter and encouraged him to persevere in his poetical compositions. Nine such poems by the potter of Geshir, all hymns on the Incarnation, are preserved in the British Museum (Add. MS. 14520).

Simeon Kukaya.

We must here mention also Stephen bar-Sudhaile, although he had no connection with the Monophysite body, but both Philoxenus and Jacob of Serugh corresponded with him, and he seems to have exercised considerable influence over his contemporaries. He was the author of a work called *The Book of Hierotheus*, professing to be the production of Hierotheus, the teacher of Dionysius of Athens. Stephen was abbot of a monastery at Edessa, and held peculiar mystical views, including the idea that future punishment will be purely of a purgatorial character, and that ultimately even the devils will be saved. These opinions certainly had their followers, but to what extent it is difficult to surmise, as no sect was formed, nor did writers openly advocate them: like all the early mystics, their supporters ascribed their writings to noted teachers in the past, and thus arose a mystic literature,

Stephen bar-Sudhaile.

especially attached to the name of Dionysius. Stephen bar-Sudhaile was thus the originator of the pseudo-Dionysian literature.

It appears that the Monophysite schism was connected with an outburst of literary activity: indeed, in the first quarter of the sixth century, the greatest writers in Syria, both in Greek and Syriac, were Monophysites. The centre of equilibrium of the Monophysites was in Western Syria, just as that of the Nestorians was in the East; yet Monophysite views did spread eastwards, even into Persia, but they never claimed a large number of adherents there. Almost the only distinguished Persian Monophysite was Simeon of Beth Arsham who wrote a history of the Nestorians in a bitterly hostile tone.

In the fifth year of Justin peace was made between Rome and Persia, one of the most curious provisions being that Kushru, the youngest son of Kabad, king of Persia, was to be adopted by the childless Justin. When the terms were made public this proved so repugnant to Greek sentiment that it had to be dropped. Soon afterwards the Persians tried to force the Zoroastrian religion upon Iberis, but the Iberians appealed to Justin who sent an army, which, however, was unable to do anything of importance to resist the Persians, who finally conquered Iberia and Georgia, some Christian princes from these two territories taking refuge in the Roman dominions. To avenge this treatment of a Christian population, Justin sent an army which ravaged Armenia, the one Christian part of the Persian Empire. The campaign is memorable as being the first command of a general afterwards so famous, Belisarius. It had no direct bearing on Syria, but was one of a series of events which finally led to the Persian conquest of Syria.

Iberia and Georgia conquered by the Persians.

Throughout his reign Justin maintained the persecuting spirit of his earlier years. In 523 a severer

edict was passed against all heretics, who were declared incapable of holding any office and were ordered into exile. (Justin, *Cod.* i. 5, 12.) The Nestorians were now mostly under Persian protection, so that the Monophysites must have been the chief sufferers, except in Egypt where the laws against them were unable to be enforced.

Later years of Justin.

In April, 527, Justin, now aged and infirm, adopted his nephew Justinian as co-emperor, and in the following August his death left Justinian sole ruler.

Theodora, the new emperor's wife, formerly a popular actress, was an ardent Monophysite. It has been suggested that the Emperor and Empress took opposite sides in current theological disputes in order to avoid a final breach with either party (Evagrius); but it rather appears that Theodora was a sincere adherent of the Monophysites whilst Justinian vacillated in his opinions, though steadily desiring to terminate the schism. Unlike most empresses, Theodora was crowned with her husband and was treated, not merely as his consort, but as empress regnant. Her resolution in preventing Justinian's flight during the Nike sedition in 532 caused the influence of this remarkable, and undoubtedly able, woman to be paramount until her death in 548.

Theodora.

Soon after Justinian's accession two Monophysite monks arrived in Constantinople to plead the cause of their co-religionists in Mesopotamia. These were Jacob Burdeana and Sergius. Jacob was a native of Tella, about fifty-five miles east of Edessa, the son of a presbyter of that city named Theophilus bar-Manu. At the age of two, he had been placed in the monastery of Pesieta on Mount Izla, under the abbot Eustacius. Here he distinguished himself by his extreme asceticism. As yet there was no generally recognized monastic dress, and Jacob habitually wore a horse-cloth or bardatha, from

Jacob Burdeana and Sergius.

which his surname was derived. Sergius, Jacob's companion, was a monk of Hola and presbyter of Tella.

These two envoys were received with great kindness by Theodora, who wished them to join her court, but this Jacob altogether refused, preferring to retire to one of the monasteries of the city. Here he remained for fifteen years, visited by many Monophysite pilgrims, including Harith ibn Jabala, the sheikh of the Christian Arabs.

During the whole of this period, the persecution of the Monophysites continued, although the influence of Theodora produced occasional temporary alleviations. Besides the two monks the Empress' advisers included Severus, the ex-patriarch of Antioch, and Anthimus, bishop of Trebizond, both strong advocates of the Monophysite doctrines.

When the see of Constantinople became vacant in 535, Theodora's influence prevailed in procuring the appointment of the Monophysite Anthimus, but next year Pope Agapetus arrived at the head of an embassy from Theodahad, king of the East Goths, and so far interested himself in the religious disputes of Constantinople as to induce the Emperor to depose Anthimus. The patriarch who succeeded was Mennas (536). One of his first acts was to hold a synod at which Anthimus, Severus of Antioch, Peter of Apamea, and a monk named Zonaras were condemned, and Monophysite doctrine declared contrary to orthodox teaching. The proceedings of this council were confirmed by an Imperial edict which decreed the exile of all Monophysites from every large city and ordered the confiscation of all their books.

Anthimus.

Thus, in 536, the Monophysites were in a worse position than ever, and it appears that this edict was generally carried out, except in Egypt, where it was impossible for the laws against the Monophysites to be enforced,

Persecution of the Monophysites.

Under this severity it appeared that, before long, the Monophysite body would be exterminated. To prevent this the Empress Theodora and the Christian sheikh Harith ibn Jabala arranged a meeting of Monophysite prelates, including Theodosius the ex-patriarch of Alexandria, Severus, the ex-patriarch of Antioch, Anthimus, the ex-patriarch of Constantinople, Peter of Apamea, Constantius of Laodicea, and other bishops of kindred views, and these secretly ordained Jacob Burdeana as titular bishop of Edessa, to act as organizing head of the Monophysite body. This appears to have happened in the year 541 or 542.

Jacob Burdeana made bishop.

After his consecration Jacob spent the rest of his life travelling on foot through Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, organizing the Monophysite Church, ordaining clergy and bishops, and encouraging their adherents. He is said to have ordained two patriarchs, 89 bishops, and from 80,000 to 100,000 clergy. By his efforts the Monophysites of Syria and Asia were formed in a coherent community, and from him they received the name of "Jacobites," by which they are now usually known. His work aroused the anger of Justinian and of the government, and no effort was spared to effect his capture. But, in a beggar's disguise of horse-cloth and aided by the Christian Arabs who were his warm adherents, he evaded all attempts at capture for thirty-eight years. In Egypt the Monophysites still recognized the authority of the deposed Theodosius and entered into full communion with the followers of Jacob.

Jacob organizes the Monophysite body.

Although Justinian thus persecuted the Jacobites, his favourite, John, bishop of Ephesus, was himself a member of the persecuted body. In 542, about the year of Jacob's consecration, John was appointed "Instructor of the heathen" in Asia Minor, and in this office travelled

John of Ephesus.

through the province of Asia Minor preaching and building churches. In 546 he was appointed head of a commission to inquire into the concealed practice of heathen rites by those who professed Christianity. Throughout Justinian's reign he remained in favour, although a Monophysite. John of Ephesus, or of Asia, as he is sometimes called, compiled a history from the times of Julius Cæsar to the year 585, when he was himself 80 years of age. The first part of this history is not known to be extant; the second part exists in extracts in two MSS. in the British Museum (Add. 14647, 14650, edited by Land, *Anecd. Syr.* ii. 289–329 and 385–391), the third in the MS. Add. 14640 (ed. Cureton, English trans. by Payne Smith, 1860). He was also the author of *Lives of the Saints* (Brit. Museum, Add. 14647, ed. Land, *Anecd. Syr.* ii. 1–288). His history must be regarded as the most valuable Syriac authority for the reign of Justinian and the early history of the Jacobites. Like most Syriac prose the style is verbose and stilted from its affectation of Greek forms and constructions, and, like most contemporary writers, John is inflamed by an intense party spirit. Yet in the main he gives the impression of being a candid and reliable authority, by no means disguising the defects and dissensions of his own party.

Jacob succeeded in completely organizing the Monophysite sect, and from this time onwards it had its own bishops who claimed to be the true occupants of the sees of Syria and Egypt. Theodosius was recognized as patriarch of Alexandria, and at the death of Severus Jacob ordained his friend Sergius as bishop of Antioch.

Having failed to stamp out the Jacobites by force Justinian tried craft. He invited Paul, whom Jacob ordained bishop of Antioch when Sergius was dead, and some other leading Jacobite bishops to Constan-

tinople ostensibly to discuss plans for healing the schism, but really to coax or threaten the leaders into conformity. As they proved stubborn they were cast into prison and there were induced to sign the decrees of Chalcedon. As soon as this was known they were all excommunicated by Jacob. Soon afterwards Paul escaped from Constantinople and found a refuge amongst the Arabs under Al Mondir, son of Harith ibn Jabala. After the lapse of three years, Peter having given clear evidence of his sorrow for signing the decrees of Chalcedon, Jacob formally restored him to communion. The news of this aroused great anger in the Egyptian Church, and Peter, who had succeeded Theodosius in 568, declared Paul deposed. The Syrians resented the attempted interference of the Alexandrian bishop, and the Jacobite body was divided into two rival and bitterly opposed camps, the Coptic Church refusing to recognize the validity of Paul as patriarch of Antioch, the Syrians recognizing him. In 578 Jacob himself visited Alexandria in the hope of healing the schism, but was induced to join in the condemnation of Paul, and found himself excommunicated by his fellow members of the Syrian Church. Throughout these negotiations John of Ephesus represents Jacob as a simple old man, wonderful in his missionary labours and in his activity in organizing the Jacobite Church, but devoid of worldly wisdom, and the constant victim of those who were more crafty.

Internal schism of the Jacobites.

This new schism divided the whole Jacobite Church and long refused every attempt at remedy. At length, in 578, Jacob again set out for Alexandria, to act as mediator, but died on the road. His real fame rests on his missionary activity and on his success in organizing the Church which has since borne his name. There is an Anaphora which is ascribed to him; no Syriac text appears to have been published. There are also some letters (translated from the

Greek) in the British Museum (MS. Add. 14602). In Arabic there is a version of a confession of faith which bears Jacob's name and a sermon on the Annunciation ascribed to him : an Ethiopic form of the confession also exists, but is evidently a translation from the Arabic.

Besides the Sergius who had been ordained Monophysite patriarch of Antioch in place of Severus, there was another Sergius, a presbyter of Rasain. In 535 he visited Antioch to lay a complaint before the patriarch Ephraim against his bishop Asylus, and he was employed by Ephraim as an envoy from Antioch to meet the Pope Agapetus when he visited Constantinople in 536. The importance of this Sergius lies in the fact that he translated into Syriac a number of the works of Aristotle, and thus helped to introduce Greek philosophy into Mesopotamia and Persia, a matter of great bearing on the subsequent development of Semitic thought. He also composed original works on logic, on *Aristotle's Views on the Causes of the Universe*, on the *Action and Influence of the Moon*, and translated the *Grammar* of Dionysius Thrax (part in Brit. Mus. Add. 14620), as well as several of the medical works of Galen, and the pantheistic apocryphal works ascribed to Dionysius of Athens. Sergius o. Rasain.

It thus appears that the Monophysites or Jacobites, at the time of their organization under the efforts of Jacob Burdeana, already possessed their own version of the Scriptures, the Philoxenian, a body of dogmatic theology translated from the Greek by Paul of Callinicus, the materials of philosophy, grammar, and medicine translated by Sergius of Rasain, as well as a number of original works in prose and verse all more or less connected with the Jacobite movement. This serves to show how important a part theology played in the intellectual and literary life of the Syriac-speaking people. True to the scholarly char-

acter of the first sectaries, the Jacobites long remained interested in educational work, which played a large part in the extension of their community.

The Jacobite Church under the later empire covered a large area. Besides the Western, Syrian, Egyptian, and Ethiopic Churches, it included also Armenia, which, exasperated at Justinian's persecution, revolted and placed itself under the protection of Persia (A.D. 536). Like the Nestorians the Jacobites were protected in Persia, but they never became numerous so far east.

VIII

THE EMPIRE OF KUSHRU

WE have lately considered influences which came upon Syria from the West, the religious disputes which Antioch shared with Alexandria and Constantinople, and which entered into the Syrian Church as a disintegrating force. Our attention must now be turned to influences from the East which also began to weaken Syria, but in a different way.

Like Christianity, the Zoroastrian religion of Persia had its sects, and one which arose in the closing years of the fifth century produced very profound effects in Syria's eastern neighbour. Although this movement, which is known as Zendikism, was marked by several points of deviation from the accepted doctrines of the Zoroastrian Magi, we shall be able to consider its rise and fall without attempting to understand the subtle theological disputes of the Persian religion, for Zendikism drew more attention by one principle which it endeavoured to put into practice, the principle, namely, of communism in its extreme form—the absolute community of property, the total negation of all rights of private ownership and of those implied in the marriage tie, for Persian ideas of marriage were not very high, and the wife being regarded merely as an article of property, community of goods meant also community of wives. Now it must be noticed that the communism

The Zendik sect.

of the Zendic system was not, like the modified community of property practised in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem, a community of possessions amongst members of the sect itself, but the assertion of a universal communism, the absolute denial of the rights of property in the world at large. Where members of the sect were strong enough they simply helped themselves to whatever they desired; yet whilst they thus appeared as brigands on a large scale, they seem really to have admitted one another to the common enjoyment of their possessions, although they did not admit the world outside, which had not adopted their tenets, to participation in these privileges.

The founder of the sect was named Masdek, and so we find the term Masdekism frequently used as the equivalent of Zendikism. Now this Masdek, about the years 499–500, obtained a great influence over Kabad, the king of Persia, and for nearly thirty years his sect was practically the state religion of Persia. This was mainly due to the fact that it was Masdek and the Zendiks who had helped Kabad to the Persian throne after the three years' anarchy which had followed the death of his father Firuz in an unsuccessful attempt against the White Huns of the Caspian shore. Having produced some degree of order by the help of the Masdekites, who acted as a royal bodyguard, Kabad had recourse to the favourite device of all autocrats of ancient and modern times—a foreign war. His father's misfortunes warned him not to attack the fierce tribesmen of the Caspian, so he turned his arms against Roman Armenia.

Masdek and Kabad.

This invasion of Armenia took place in 502. The first important action was the siege of Amida which lasted for three months. During the progress of the siege Kabad visited Jacob of Endjeia, a Christian hermit who lived a few miles

Persians attack Amida

from the city. In spite of the Zendik religion which he professed, Kabad was not unfriendly to Christianity, and both Nestorians and Jacobites who fell under the ban of the civil power in the Roman Empire found a refuge in Persia. And now Kabad was so impressed by his conversation with Jacob, and by his mode of life—he lived in a spacious wicker cage in an exposed place—that he promised to grant him any favour he choose to ask. The hermit requested that, in the event of Amida being taken, his wicker cage might serve as a sanctuary for any fugitives who had recourse to him : a favour granted and faithfully observed. The few who found safety in Jacob's cage, however, were a mere trifle compared with the 80,000 who are said to have been slain after Kabad's triumphal entry into Amida.

The Persian army then passed on to Edessa, but this city proved impregnable. Next year the Emperor Anastasius sent Celer in command of an army against the Persians, and this general wisely attempted a diversion by invading Persia. Neither side made any further progress, and this, with the terrible severity of the winter of 504–505, inclined both sides for peace, and so in 507 a truce for seven years was agreed upon, the Romans repurchasing Amida from the Persians. and Edessa.

Meanwhile other Persian forces had made a more successful expedition in the south-west, and had even harried the northern coast of Egypt until within sight of Alexandria. It is interesting to note that, of two inscriptions found near Cyrene in 1823 one, which is written in Greek, invokes "Thoth, Chronos, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Epicurus, Masdek, John, Christ, and our Cyrenaic teachers," so that Masdekism had evidently spread to northern Egypt, very possibly in the train of the invading army of Kabad. Persians in Egypt.

No doubt the real purpose of these incursions into

Armenia, Syria, and Egypt was to wipe out the recollection of the previous disasters amongst the Huns, and by this means to re-establish the monarchy in the confidence of the Persian people. In this Kabad was thoroughly successful, and whatever strength and vigour Persia possessed in the last century and a half of its pre-Mohammedan history must be ascribed to his reorganisation.

Persia under Kabad.

The eight years which followed the expiration of the truce saw a renewal of petty warfare, but the attention of the Roman Emperor was mainly occupied by the Huns who were invading Asia Minor, whilst Persia was busy with border struggles on the Arabian frontier, and with the work of internal reform. It was during this interval that the Nestorians began to enter more fully into Persian life, and it was under Kabad that they began their missionary expansion eastwards. There had long been a bishop of the Persian Christians, and he had been associated with the city of Seleucia, or Ctesiphon, and bore the title of "Catholicus." About the year 496 this office had fallen into the hands of the Nestorians, and henceforth the Catholicus of Seleucia is the pope of the Nestorian community. So long as the Persian monarchy lasted this bishop lived under the protection of the Persian king, and the Nestorians who remained in the territories of the Roman emperor acknowledged the religious supremacy of a subject of the Persian king. Theological controversy had first opened the breach, persecution had gradually driven the Nestorians eastwards, and now under Persian protection they assumed a more peculiarly oriental colour.

Kabad I, as we have noted in his conduct at Amida, had some kindly feelings towards Christianity. It was he who proposed that his youngest and favourite son Kushru should be adopted by the childless Justin.

The project failed, chiefly through the popular repugnance to a "barbarian" ruler, although technical difficulties raised by the Greek lawyers formed the assigned reason.

Reference has already been made to the Huns who were dwelling in the north along the shores of the Caspian Sea, and who had already caused serious difficulties both to the Persians and to the Romans. We must now glance at the Arab tribes who were the neighbours of both on the south. In southern Arabia Yemen had just been conquered by the Christian state of Abyssinia, which acted as an ally of the Roman Emperor. It is futile to guess what might have happened had the course of history been different from what actually was the case; yet sometimes such a guess may help to point out the importance of an event which otherwise we might be inclined to ignore. Arabian Christianity did not last as a vigorous growth, to some extent because the Imperial power at Constantinople was unable to support the advance of Abyssinia into Arabia, to some greater extent because Islam arose as the adjunct of a growing national spirit. Had the Christian conquest of Arabia proceeded it would not appear to have left room for the rise of Mohammedanism.

Christian Arabs.

Besides Christian Arabs there were also Jewish Arabs in a kingdom ruled by a sheikh named Curly. We are often inclined to picture to ourselves the Jews, after the fall of Jerusalem, as mere wanderers scattered amongst the nations, and it is distinctly interesting to trace the evidences of a flourishing Jewish Arab kingdom early in the sixth century.

Jewish Arabs.

But Syria had no direct contact with either Christian or Jewish Arabs; trouble for Syria was brewing amongst the Arabs settled to the north-east around

Hira where they were tributary to Persia. The ruler of the Arabs of Hira was Al Mondar, who was not a Christian but a worshipper of One God, for a distinct monotheist movement had taken place amongst the Arabs, and had already laid down the lines on which the work of Mohammed was afterwards developed. Al Mondar, however, refused to become either Christian, Jew, or Masdekite, and in this theoretical monotheism, apart from these existing religions, he seems to have been typical of the Arab theological position of the time.

Al Mondar.

The result of this was that the Masdekite Hareth, son of Amr, expelled Al Mondar from Hira, for Masdekism was at the time distinctly aggressive in character. Expelled from his kingdom, Al Mondar became the leader of a band of predatory Arabs, and a few years later we find him plundering Syria and ravaging even the suburbs of Antioch (A.D. 529). It was this which revealed both the wealth and weakness of Greek Syria and acted as an incentive to the advance of Islam about a century later; indeed, during these hundred years, the Arabs realized more and more clearly that Syria would be an easy and lucrative prey. At the time the exploit of Al Mondar encouraged the Persians to follow his example, and so entering into a temporary alliance with Al Mondar and his fighting tribes the Persians advanced into Syria, but were met and defeated by Belisarius at Darus. Next year (531) another invasion took place, and an indecisive battle was fought on April 19. Soon after this engagement Kabad was struck down by paralysis and died, leaving the crown to his youngest son Kushru I.

Arab invasion of Syria.

Before the death of Kabad Masdekism had ceased to be in the ascendency. Gradually a feeling had grown up against it, and there were many enemies who desired its disgrace. The

Downfall of Masdekism.

non-success of the various expeditions against the Roman Empire gave the opportunity, and the blame was thrown upon the commander Seoses, the leader of the Masdekites, although he differed from the majority of the sect in various details, and the one who had been principally engaged in the restoration of the monarchy under Kabad. The downfall of Seoses was the signal for the revival of the older Zoroastrian religion. In 527 the Roman Emperors began a rigorous persecution of the Manichæan sect, and on the appearance of Manichæan refugees in Persia they encountered similar treatment at the hands of Kabad. As a result, the persecutions of the Masdekites and Manichæans are so confused one with another that it is impossible to disentangle their histories. For one thing the terms Manichæan and Masdekite seem to have been used as synonymous by the Persian historians: perhaps the Masdekites owed more to the previous work of the Manichæans than has been supposed. At any rate, the later years of Kabad saw a definite reaction against Masdekism.

Kabad introduces use of baths.

In the course of his invasions of Syria, Kabad had greatly enjoyed the pleasures of the baths which were characteristic of Græco-Roman civilization, and these he introduced into Persia. Later on, when the use of the baths in the Roman Empire was rigorously suppressed by the efforts of the Church, they still survived in Persia, and thence passed into other Mohammedan lands.

Kushru I.

In 531 the reign of Kushru I commenced with the proclamation of a general toleration, in which not only Christians but also Manichæans and Masdekites were included: "My authority," the king declared, "does not extend to men's thoughts." Justinian, on the contrary, was at that very time endeavouring to enforce absolute uniformity

in religion and closed the school of Athens, the last surviving relic of Paganism. The seven philosophers who then formed the school migrated to Persia, expecting a golden age under the tolerant rule of Kushru. Actual experience, however, convinced them that the rule of an oriental despot, however enlightened, was far from the anticipated golden age. It is to Kushru's credit that, finding the philosophers anxious to return home, he arranged with Justinian that they should be allowed to remain unmolested in their own religious beliefs.

The period 532–539 was spent in the extension and strengthening of the eastern frontiers of Persia.

Kushru's first invasion of Syria.

In 539 Kushru returned to Ctesiphon, and was persuaded by the Beduin Al Mondar to renew Kabad's attempted conquest of Syria. The pretext assigned was that Justinian was aiming at universal dominion, but there is no doubt that the real reason was that Al Mondar remembered the ease with which he had once plundered Syrian territory. In 540 the Persians invaded Syria and captured the city of Shurab. The prisoners taken from this city were released at the request of Candidus, bishop of the neighbouring town of Sergiopolis, who undertook to pay a ransom of 200 pounds of gold. Then Kushru took Marbogh, which paid a ransom, then Berœa, where he was persuaded to content himself with half the sum he at first demanded, and finally proceeded against Antioch itself, which was captured after a short resistance. Al Mondar had been right—Syria, the richest province of the Roman Empire, probably at that time the richest territory in the world, was able to offer no effectual resistance to the Persian armies. From Antioch Kushru carried off many works of art and a vast number of captives. On his way homewards he made an attack upon Edessa, a city generally regarded as impregnable,

but was taken ill during the siege. Here he declared that he would be willing to put to ransom all the Antiochene captives, and a public subscription was started, but the Governor of Edessa became alarmed at the large sum of gold which would be drained from the city, and stopped the project. The city of Carrhæ then offered to contribute, but Kushru refused to receive money from a city which was still inhabited by idolaters.

During Kushru's illness trouble occurred in Persia. Kushru had married a Christian wife, and his son Nushizad also was a Christian. When the king was taken ill at Edessa a report reached Persia that he was dead, and at once Nushizad seized the crown. Very soon the rumour was proved false, but Nushizad was persuaded by persons who appear to have been in the pay of Justinian to endeavour to secure his position. The event was deeply distressing to Kushru, for Nushizad was a second Absalom, as well in the love with which his father regarded him as in his rebellion; but it was necessary to take prompt measures, and the commander, Ram Berzin, was sent against the rebels. It was the king's order to treat the Prince with every possible consideration, but to spare no rigour in dealing with his followers. The rival forces met, and it seems to have been at once evident that Nushizad's followers could not possibly stand against the royal forces. In obedience to the king's orders the commander sent an emissary, an old officer named Firuz, well known to Nushizad, to beg him to submit without resistance, but to no effect. In the battle which followed Nushizad was mortally wounded by an arrow and carried out of the field. In his tent he was attended by a Christian bishop—probably Mar Abha,—and to this bishop he confessed his sincere repentance for having taken up arms against his father, an act which, he was

Nushizad.

convinced, could never win the approval of Heaven. Having professed himself a Christian he then died, and the rebellion was quickly put down. Some historians place this revolt two years later when there was a pestilence which seems to have attacked the king.

Mar Abha.

The Mar Abha, who probably attended the last hours of Nushizad, was the Nestorian Catholicus from 536–552. He was a convert from Zoroastrianism, and had studied Greek at Nisibis and then at Edessa, making use of his knowledge to prepare and publish a new version of the Old Testament. This appears to have been a total failure, for the Nestorians, unlike the Jacobites, steadily adhered to the Peshitta. On being appointed Catholicus he established a school at Seleucia, which soon became a great centre of Nestorian scholarship. He wrote commentaries, homilies, and letters, the two former classes of work representing, no doubt, the substance of his teaching in the school which he founded. There are extant hymns which are ascribed to him. Kushru, after his return from Syria, taunted Mar Abha with holding a type of Christianity unknown in the rest of the world. But Mar Abha did much to remove the more marked peculiarities of the Nestorian body, especially again enforcing celibacy amongst the bishops. From time to time he was admitted to controversy with Kushru, until on one occasion, being tactless enough not to be convinced by the arguments of the sovereign, he was sentenced to banishment, and then, as he ignored this, was cast into prison, where he died in 552. It seems not improbable that Mar Abha had had too much to do with Nushizad, if not implicated in his revolt, at least responsible for his adherence to Christianity, and so there was a lurking sense of grievance on the king's part.

As the Antiochene prisoners had not been ransomed at Edessa, Kushru carried them off into Mesopotamia, where he built for them the city of Chosroantioch which, we are informed by the Persian historians, was an exact replica of Antioch. One Persian author states that the only difference was discovered by a cobbler who found in his garden at Chosroantioch a mulberry-tree more than he had possessed at Antioch. It is evident that Kushru had been deeply impressed by the city of Antioch, and by Greek culture as a whole, and that Persian life about this time began to be very deeply tinctured by Greek influences.

Chosroantioch.

In 542 Kushru claimed from Candidus the payment of the sum to which he had pledged himself as ransom for the captives taken at Shurab ; but the bishop was unable to raise the money, in fact he confessed that he had only promised in the expectation that the Imperial Government would find part of the sum required, and this had not been done. Therefore Candidus was put to death. In the course of the same year Kushru advanced south and attacked Jerusalem, but was repulsed by Belisarius.

Candidus executed.

Mar Abha's foundation of a school at Seleucia seems to have suggested to Kushru the idea of founding a Zoroastrian school similar to it and to the Christian institutions at Edessa and Nisibis. In pursuance of this plan the king opened a college at Djundi Shapur, and here many Greek, Syrian, and Indian works were translated into Persian, and the ancient laws of Persia were rendered into the vernacular.

School of Djundi Shapur.

Meanwhile the school at Seleucia became a centre of Nestorian life. It was a period during which the Nestorians were returning to a greater conformity to the usages of the rest of

School of Seleucia.

Christendom. We have already mentioned Mar Abha's restoration of celibacy, at least as far as the bishops were concerned. About the same time two distinguished monks, both bearing the name of Abraham of Kashkar, introduced reforms into the monastic life which were also calculated to produce conformity with the practices of the Church within the Roman Empire. Probably we must connect this return to conformity with the increase of Greek influence observable during the reign of Kushru and the contact with the Empire due to the invasion of Syria; nevertheless the Nestorians remained a distinct body.

The two Abrahams of Kashkar.

Returning to the time of the close of Kushru's first expedition into Syria. In Chalcis the Lazi revolted from Rome and gave allegiance to the Persian king. As this was in 541 before the death of Nushizad, it is not improbable that they were partly led to this by the prospect of a Christian king of Persia. Their experiences under Persian rule, however, were not favourable. The separation from the Roman Empire brought about the cessation of the slave trade with Constantinople which formed the staple industry of Chalcis, and when they appealed to Kushru his only solution was to plan the total removal of the Lazi from Chalcis, that they might be settled as colonists elsewhere in the Persian kingdom. This idea was so repugnant to the Lazi that in 549 they returned to their allegiance to Rome. After thirteen years' further desultory fighting the Romans were compelled to restore the Lazi to Persia, it being stipulated that Christianity should be tolerated and the practice of burial permitted. This was a great bone of contention, for the Zoroastrian religion did not permit the elements of fire, water, or earth to be polluted by the dead, and so forbade both burning or burying the dead, but required their

Revolt of Lazi.

exposure to birds or animals, as is still the practice of the Parsis of Bombay, a thing most repugnant to Christian feeling. In addition, Rome contracted to pay an annual sum of 30,000 pieces of gold and that Persia should undertake the defence of the Caspian territory against the Turks. It will be noted that, in spite of Kushru's decree of toleration, it was necessary to secure by treaty the protection of Christianity amongst the Lazi, and this was the case because the Persian provincial governors possessed very great powers, and quite recently the governor of Armenia had behaved with great severity towards the Christians in his jurisdiction.

Meanwhile the Catholicus Mar Abha had died and Kushru appointed his favourite physician, Joseph, as bishop of Seleucia (552). Many strange stories are related of his cruelty as bishop, and after three years he was deposed on a petition of the Christians of Seleucia. He lived twelve years after his deposition and during that period no Catholicus was appointed. About the same time the indefatigable Jacob Burdeana consecrated Achudemes as Jacobite bishop in Persia, but after some time Achudemes was beheaded for having made a proselyte of a member of the royal family. No decree of toleration amongst the Persians ever permitted the making of converts from the state religion.

Joseph of Seleucia.

The Jacobites, however, were of little importance so far east where Nestorianism represented the prevailing type of Christianity. After the death of Joseph in 567, Ezekiel, a disciple of Mar Abha, was appointed Catholicus of Seleucia, under whom lived the periodeutes Bodh, the translator into Syriac of the Indian tales known as *Kalilah* and *Dimnah* (ed. Bickell and Benfy, 1876). Dr. Wright considers that Bodh

Ezekiel.

Bodh.

made his translation from a Persian version. It is extremely interesting to find that the Nestorians were beginning to take an interest in Indian literature, an interest probably to be referred to the influence of the Djundi Shapur school.

Isaac of Nineveh.

Amongst the writers of this age must be placed Isaac of Nineveh, monk and then bishop in the monastery of Mar Matthew at Mosul. Later in life he resigned his bishopric and retired to Sketis in Egypt, where he lived as a hermit and composed many works upon the ascetic life which attained great celebrity in monastic circles (see Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 14632, 14633). Of several of these, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Greek versions are extant.

Controversy aroused by Hannana.

About this time there arose a serious controversy amongst the Nestorians. Hannana of Hedhaiyabh, head of the school of Nisibis, questioned some of the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and inclined to conformity with the Greek Church. We have already noted the philo-Greek tendencies of Kushru's days. These views were published during the pontificate of Ezekiel and aroused great discussion. The next Catholicus,

Isho-yabh.

Isho-yabh (581–595), held a council at which Hannana was condemned, and the succeeding Catholicus Sabhrisho (596–604) repeated this condemnation, but the followers of Hannana were numerous, and during the reign of Kushru's grandson, Kushru II (590–628), obtained a transient supremacy. At the death of Sabhrisho in 604 there were two candidates for the office of Catholicus, Tell-Besme, bishop of Nisibis, a Nestorian of the ordinary type, and Gregory of Kashkar, who was a follower of Hannana. Kushru II had married a Greek who was a Jacobite, and so disposed to favour the school of Hannana. By her influence Gregory was appointed

Catholicus and the Nestorian party suffered temporary oppression in Persia until the death of Kushru II in 628.

In 572 Kushru demanded from the Romans the payment of the arrears of the 30,000 gold pieces promised as annual payment for keeping the Caspian gates by the treaty of 562. The Emperor refused, indeed he was not in a position to pay anything, and so Kushru resolved on a new war. To prepare for this he raised a loan amongst his subjects. One wealthy shoemaker was ready to contribute 4,000,000 drachma, for which Kushru offered interest at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. But the shoemaker declined to receive interest, and only desired in return that his son should be made a scribe. This idea of a breach of caste, that the son of a shoemaker should be reckoned amongst the professional scribes, filled the Persians with unspeakable horror and the loan was unconditionally refused.

Kushru's second invasion of Syria.

At last the money was raised and the army advanced into Syria (572). Berœa was taken, then Daras, and all the country plundered up to Antioch. The Emperor Justin was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of Persia, and the Roman Empire became tributary to the eastern king, submitting to a payment of ten oxhides of gold. In spite of this the war continued until 575, when Tiberius II was associated as emperor with the insane Justin, and a truce for three years was concluded. War, however, continued in Armenia and then in Mesopotamia, but at last this guerilla warfare flickered out. The death of Justin in 578 left Tiberius II sole emperor, and next year Kushru himself died, after receiving baptism on his deathbed from the Nestorian Catholicus.

The reign of Kushru was one of exceptional interest, and shows the degeneracy of the Roman

Empire as well as the growth of oriental power. Justinian, the great reorganizer of the Roman Empire, was the contemporary of Kushru, but there may be a question as to which was the greater and abler man. It is also of interest to note how both Greek and Indian influences were spreading in Persia, as well as the extension and increasing power of Christianity there.

Kushru was succeeded as king of Persia by his son Hormuz (579–590). For the first three years of his reign Hormuz was guided by the statesman-philosopher Buzurg, but after this minister's retirement, from old age, Hormuz gave himself up to every form of self-indulgence and tyranny. Under these conditions the power of Persia declined, and the land suffered invasion on the north, east, and west. To check the Romans, Bahram, a general who had distinguished himself under Kushru, was sent to invade Colchis, but he was defeated and recalled in disgrace. Knowing that this was equivalent to sentence of death, Bahram revolted, and succeeded in capturing Hormuz, whom he put to death. Kushru, the king's son, fled for refuge to the Romans, and was well received by Probus, the governor of Circesium, and afterwards by the Emperor Maurice. With the help of the Romans this younger Kushru defeated Bahram, and became king as Kushru II. As he owed his kingdom and also obtained his wife from the Emperor Maurice, Kushru was devoted to the dynasty then reigning at Constantinople, and remained so throughout. Although not himself a Christian, he paid honour to the Virgin and to the martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, two saints popular amongst the Syrians, whilst his wife was an ardent Jacobite, as has already been mentioned with respect to the appointment of the Catholicus Gregory.

Hormuz.

Bahram.

Kushru II.

In the year 604 the Roman Emperor Maurice was assassinated, and the Persian king resolved to attack the Empire so as to avenge his benefactor. In 604 the Persians once again invaded the eastern provinces and took the city of Daras. This invasion of Kushru II was the severest blow that the Roman power in Asia had to endure previous to the rise of Islam: extending over five years, it gradually advanced until it reached Constantinople itself. It was not a mere plundering expedition, but a serious invasion whose success clearly proves the growing weakness of the Empire, and makes it appear that, had it not been for the rise of Islam, Persian authority might have been permanently established in Western Asia.

Kushru II invades the Roman Empire.

Next year (606) the invaders reached Amida, in 607 they were at Edessa, in 608 at Aleppo, and by 611 they had conquered all northern Syria and established themselves at Antioch. Then they turned south and conquered Palestine.

Syria conquered.

In 615 Jerusalem revolted, but received a cruel punishment, some 17,000 persons being put to death, and about 35,000 led away captive, and the renowned fragment of the true cross, the most precious relic of the city, was taken. This was regarded as a great disgrace, and was felt throughout the Empire that a relic famed and revered throughout all Christendom should have fallen into the hands of those who were not Christians. Next year (616) the Persians took Alexandria, and in 617 besieged Constantinople. Although the imperial city was not taken, Asia Minor remained in the hands of the Persians until 624.

Jerusalem destroyed.

Kushru received his check, not from the Romans, but from a people who were yearly growing more powerful, and were destined ultimately to displace both Rome and Persia in Asia

Arab revolt.

—the Arabs. Kushru II had a harem of 3,000 wives as well as 12,000 slave women, but he now demanded as wife Hadiqah, the daughter of the Christian Arab Naaman, himself the son of Al Mondir. Naaman refused to permit his Christian daughter to enter the harem of a Zoroastrian, and for this refusal he was trampled to death by an elephant, whilst Hadiqah took refuge in a convent. The news of this outrage upon an Arab provoked all the Beduin tribes, and there was a genuine Arab revolt. Although the Beduins within the Persian dominions were numerous, an even more serious aspect of the matter lay in the fact that they were the fighting population. The result of this rebellion was the total defeat of Kushru II, who had to flee for safety to the Roman Emperor Heraclius. Thus the Arab Al Mondir had proved that Arabs could conquer the Roman armies, and now the events which followed the execution of his son proved that they were equally capable of defeating the forces of Persia. These facts produced a profound impression upon the Arab mind, and must have been largely responsible for the conquests undertaken by the followers of Mohammed. At the date we have now reached (628) Mohammed was just beginning his military expeditions, but the important and interesting picture of the rising power of Islam must be reserved for separate treatment in the next chapter.

Syriac literature was now in its decline, yet there were several authors and translators of note at the commencement of the seventh century.

Paul. The Abbot Paul translated the works of Gregory Nazianzen and the Octoechus of Severus into Syriac. This Paul had fled from Syria to avoid the invading armies of Kushru II, and took refuge in Cyprus, where there were many Syriac-speaking monks.

Isho-yabh, who succeeded Ezekiel as Catholicus in

581, and who presided over the synod at which Hannana was condemned, was the author of a treatise against the Jacobites and other works of a theological character. Isho-yabh.

About this same time Paul of Tella and Thomas of Herkel were preparing revised versions of the Syriac Scriptures for the Jacobites (see p. 113 above); indeed they were at Alexandria when the city was besieged by the Persian forces of Kushru II.

IX

THE RISE OF ISLAM

MORE than once we have had occasion to note the importance of the Arab tribes, essentially warlike in their character, and able successfully to resist both Persia and Rome. Their weak point, however, was their lack of cohesion, but this was at last remedied by a great national and religious movement, which took place in the seventh century, but which had been preparing for several generations previously. To understand the nature and progress of this movement it will be necessary to survey briefly the previous condition of the southern Arab tribes, amongst whom the movement took form.

The Arabs.

The early religion of Arabia had been paganism of the usual Semitic type, the stone-worship and tree-worship described by Robertson Smith in his *Religion of the Semites*, but even before the sixth century there was a distinct tendency to monotheism. Possibly this was due to contact with the three great monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism; but there had been, more than once previously, outbursts, if we may so speak, of monotheism amongst the Semitic races.

Judaism was fairly prosperous in Arabia, especially amongst the northern tribes, many of which were definitely Jewish. Judaism had first spread from Palestine into northern Arabia under the proselytizing zeal of the age of the Maccabees,

Jewish Arabs.

and in Arabia it remained a proselytizing religion for a couple of centuries after the fall of Jerusalem. The Jew may have been despised in the Roman Empire, and was persecuted at a later date when Christianity was in the ascendant, but in northern Arabia, during the first few centuries of the Christian era, it was not merely a prosperous religion, but was the dominant one. Amongst the Himyarite Arabs there was a succession of Jewish sovereigns, some of whom succeeded in extending their sway over surrounding tribes. Medina was the great centre of Arabic Judaism, and there the Jews were in the ascendant until the fifth century, whilst Jewish tribes seem to have lingered on until the eighteenth century.

In the sixth century Christianity entered Arabia in the train of the Abyssinian conquerors in Yemen (523). Although the Christian Abyssinian empire in Arabia was not permanent, Christianity remained the professed religion of several tribes. Indeed, there seemed every probability that, as Judaism had ceased to proselytize, Christianity would spread itself through Arabia. A Christian Arab sheikh, Abraha-l-Ashram (537–570), made an attempt to conquer Mecca. The Koran (Sura 5) ascribes his repulse to a miracle, but a rival and more probable tradition attributes it to an outbreak of small-pox, then for the first time appearing in Arabia. Amongst the Arabs, however, Christianity presented itself in a debased form: this is not merely a modern opinion, it is the expressed view of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who pictures Arabian Christianity as corrupted by a host of superstitions; and so it appears that the rise of Islam was, to some extent, an assertion of purer monotheism, to which the Semitic mind had long inclined, and which had received emphasis by contact with Judaism and Zoroastrianism against a very debased and misunderstood Christianity. From the mentions of Christianity made in the Koran, it

Christian Arabs.

appears that the apocryphal Gospels ascribed to St. James and St. Thomas—both, especially the latter, works of a somewhat puerile character and of gnostic bias—were more prominently in circulation than the canonical Gospels. Nor must it be overlooked that the Nestorian and Jacobite schisms had very seriously damaged the influence of Christianity.

Conquest of Medina.

In 429 a large number of Beduin tribes migrated south from Syria into Arabia, and settled at Medina, displacing the hitherto dominant Judaism. This success gave rise to a distinct nationalist movement, which had its centre at Medina, but which extended its influence over all the tribes of northern Arabia and Syria, and which partly inspired, partly was encouraged by, the achievements of such men as Al Mondar and his son.

Early in the seventh century some Arabs from Medina visited Mecca, and there heard the teaching of Mohammed. Strongly inclined to monotheism, but unwilling to be identified with Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, or Masdekism, these visitors at once recognized in Mohammed the desired leader of a religious revival which was calculated to give coherence and soul to the nationalist movement.

Mohammed.

Mohammed was born soon after Abraha-l-Ashram's attempt upon Mecca, probably in the year 570, and he commenced teaching in his native city about the thirty-ninth year of his age. During his earlier years he had made two journeys into Syria, and had there been brought into contact with Christianity, probably of the Jacobite type, as we may gather from the manner in which the Koran speaks of "Jesus, the son of Mary." It is evident that Mohammed had a fair knowledge of the Old Testament and the Talmud; his acquaintance with the New Testament is not so evident, as his references to the life of Christ appear to have been drawn from the apocryphal Gospels. After thirteen years' teach-

ing the opposition aroused at Mecca compelled Mohammed to flee from the city, and he took refuge amongst the Arabs at Medina, who, as has been mentioned above, had become his followers. This plunged the prophet into the midst of the nationalist movement, and before long he was pressed forward into the place of leadership of that movement, which, it must be remembered, had an altogether independent beginning. After his settlement at Medina, Mohammed gradually became the national champion, his previous religious teaching now being united with schemes for temporal power. The Jews had been displaced by the Syrian Arabs who had settled at Medina, and an intense animosity prevailed between the conquerors and the conquered, an hostility which clearly appears in Mohammed's later aversion towards the Jews. On the other hand, there were many friendly relations between the Christian Arabs and the settlers in Medina, and thus a friendly disposition towards Christianity is observable in the life and teaching of Mohammed. Indeed, in all respects Mohammed identified himself with the racial, political, and religious prejudices of the Arabs of Medina, at whose head he commenced a career of temporal ambition.

Settles at Medina.

Seven years after his flight from Mecca Mohammed and the Medina Arabs conquered the northern Jewish tribes who bordered upon Syria, and next year, advancing south, he entered Mecca as conqueror, destroyed the idols worshipped there, and established his teaching. Within the next two years all Arabia had become Mohammedan, save for some Jewish and Christian tribes which were allowed to continue as tributary to the dominant Islam.

Returns to Mecca.

The ambition of the Medina Arabs after Mohammed's settlement in their midst awakened the alarm of the Government at Constantinople, and troops were assembled at Tabuk, near the

Romans alarmed.

southern frontier of Syria, to check any attempt at invading the Roman Empire. Although Mohammed sent a formal message to the Emperor Heraclius, inviting him to embrace the new creed, no attempt was made to advance further towards the north; yet the moral influence of Mohammed seems to have spread among the Arab population within the Persian and Roman dominions. A curious instance of this appears in the fact that the Christian Arabs who fought under Kushru II began to invoke the name of Mohammed in battle.

In 632 Mahomet died, and was succeeded by Abu-Bakr, and two years later by Omar. It was under these two leaders that Islam began its expansion northwards. In the first year of Abu-Bakr the general Kaled advanced north-east and conquered the Arabs of Hira, the kingdom of Al Mondar.

Abu-Bakr.

Since the death of Kushru II, Persia had passed through a period of disorder, and it was not until the Arabs were threatening the frontier that the Persians once more united under Yezdegerd. The invading forces remained for some four years about the lower Euphrates, and then in 636 entered Persia. One great victory for the Arabs in the plain of Cadesia practically placed Persia at their mercy; from this their advance was one continued progress of conquest, and at the end of fifteen years all Persia had fallen under Mohammedan dominion. Thus terminated the history of the Sassanidæ, who, a while before, had seemed likely to extend their empire over all western Asia.

Conquest of Persia.

Meanwhile, in 632, the armies of Abu-Bakr had entered Syria. In 633 Damascus was captured, and the more purely Semitic parts of Syria, those districts which had once formed part of the Nabatæan Empire, were added to the Mohammedan conquests. Then followed (in 637) the capture

Conquest of Syria.

of Jerusalem, and in 638 the conquest of Antioch, so that in 639 all Syria was lost to the Roman Empire.

From this time Mohammedanism was the dominant religion of Syria, and Syriac Christianity has survived only in the two comparatively small sects of the Syrian Jacobites and the Nestorians. At the same time Arabic became the prevailing speech, and, although Syriac literature continued to be produced for some centuries, and Syriac remained in use as a classical idiom and for liturgical use, like Latin in western Europe, it gradually ceased to be a living language. It was in the latter part of 637 that the Moslem armies marched northwards to Antioch; at their approach the cities and monasteries were deserted, and all the cultured and luxurious life of Syria came to an end. In subsequent history the story of Syria is merely a part of that of the Mohammedan Califate, and, later on, of the Turkish Empire. We take that year (637), consequently, as terminating the history of Christian Syria. The Greek influence which came from the West had been dominant for some seven centuries, although in its later days threatened by the rival influence of Persia, and then rolled back westwards before the advance of Islam.

Conclusion.

In the preceding chapters the history of those seven centuries has been briefly outlined in the hope that even a bare summary of that history may show that it contains more than one point of interest which would well repay careful study. To the student of history there are the means of supplementing to a very considerable degree the history of the later Roman Empire in Asia. To the student of ecclesiastical history the Syriac writers will furnish the most valuable material for the study of the Nestorian and Jacobite schisms, two movements of great importance in the development of Christianity.

To the Patristic student it is deserving of note that, whilst the Greek and Latin Fathers have been studied exhaustively for centuries past, there is in Syriac an immense amount of material illustrating the doctrine, worship, and development of the Christian Church, which is, to a large extent, a field as yet untrodden by Western feet.

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